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The emotional appeal of television and its implications for preaching

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THE EMOTIONAL APPEAL OF TELEVISION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR PREACHING

by

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the nature, messages, and methods of television communication through the rhetorical categories of *'ethos'*, *'logos'*, and *'pathos'*, to determine the implications for preaching today. Television's main goal is to attract the largest audience for advertisers, and uses messages and methods that appeal to emotion, so that people experience television more than they learn from it. Deductive *'logos'* is virtually absent from television, and only messages that elevate *'pathos' and 'ethos'* succeed on television. The environment, values, and perceptions of everyone have been altered by television. It is the major storyteller of the culture, and has redefined society's communication expectations. People have become more sceptical about who they will listen to, and more demanding that messages be creative and appeal to their experience and emotion. Television is an effective communicator because it matches methods and messages to the felt needs of people and dominant cultural moods and expectations.

Preachers have a similar rhetorical goal, to find out how people are persuaded and to design the right arguments in the right order for the benefit of the audience. They need today to realize the importance of emotional appeal in attracting attention and changing values. Preachers can become more fluent in using *'pathos'* by reading the Scriptures according to the text's emotional flow

and analyzing their own points of identification. Sermons should be designed according to narrative principles for maximum emotional impact. As an oral event, preaching requires a speaker who can make the words come alive through an impassioned delivery. Persuasion can be enhanced or weakened depending on how well the preacher combines the '*pathos*' of the message with his/her own '*ethos*'. The conclusion is that in light of rhetorical principles, and the influence of television, a new preaching strategy is needed that recreates the emotional appeal of Scripture in the emotional experience of the hearer.

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With gratitude I acknowledge Dr. Eduard Riegert for aiding the inception and completion of this study. As my professor and thesis advisor, Dr. Riegert provided a great resource with his ideas, suggested reading, and thorough corrections. I have become a better student, researcher, and preacher because of Dr. Riegert's input.

My wife, Sue, also deserves credit for the completion of this thesis. She was eager to discuss/debate the content, provide clerical help, and give high doses of love and encouragement. It was Sue's patience and support that gave me the freedom and motivation to do my best. Michael (3 yrs.) and Allegra (5 yrs.) sacrificed as well by letting Dad stay at work for long hours.

I am grateful to the Lord and each of these people mentioned for inspiring me in this project.

For since by means of the art of rhetoric both truth and falsehood are urged, who would dare to say that truth should stand in the person of its defenders unarmed against lying, so that they who wish to urge falsehoods, may know how to make their listeners benevolent, or attentive, or docile in their presentation, while the defenders of truth are ignorant of that art? While the faculty of eloquence, which is of great value in urging either evil or justice, is in itself indifferent, why should it not be obtained for the uses of the good in the service of truth, if the evil usurp it for the winning of perverse and vain causes in defence of iniquity and error?

St. Augustine, On Christian Doctrine

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the thesis statement, objectives for making a contribution to homiletics, a survey of the background conditions warranting the study, a definition of key terms, the scope and limits of the methodology, and a summary of the main issues and their implications as organized in chapters two through six.

Thesis Statement

Using the categories of *'logos'*, *'ethos'*, and *'pathos'*, a rhetorical analysis of television communication indicates that in order for contemporary preachers to be persuasive, they must stress *'pathos'* to evoke and stimulate the emotions in their audience.

Contribution Objectives

This study advocates preachers to take another option from either rejecting television technology as being immoral, manipulative, and anti-gospel, or adopting it uncritically as the greatest means for spreading the gospel. By taking the principles of how television communicates effectively and applying them to written and oral sermons, homiletics may find in television another helpful voice and guide, making this sacred art even more

interdisciplinary. Homiletics should continue to learn from the theories of psychology, rhetoric, communication, and electronic media.

It is also hoped that encouragement will be given to the revolution away from using only rationalistic, point-based sermons to more experiential, narrative, inductive preaching - realizing that people think and live differently now because of the entertainment-driven culture. Reclaiming the popularity of preaching and its power to improve lives is possible when preaching uses the dominant language, and fits the general ethos of the culture. Motivating preachers to pursue an audience-sensitive homiletic in developing sermons that are culturally relevant and media-influenced, is a goal of this study.

The relationship between rhetoric and homiletics is further solidified in this thesis. By clarifying the full meaning of rhetoric as not just a pejorative term, or system for rules of logic, this discipline can instruct the design of sermons to persuade people in mind, heart, and will. Preachers should adopt rhetoric as an aid to homiletics, and rhetorically analyze their messages, congregation, Scripture, and mass media, to become more aware of what ensures effective communication. This rhetorical awareness should translate into preaching that persuades.

Preachers have always faced a dilemma when trying to preach on an appropriate level for everyone within a diverse audience. There are differences in age, education, economics, religiosity, sex, learning styles, etc., so how can one message feed them all?

Suggestions have been to use simpler language, design illustrations to homogenize, or mentally segment, the audience and preach only to one target audience at a time. Hope may be given when one realizes that people are alike and unified in their emotions. All people love, hate, worry, rejoice, etc., and respond emotionally when these qualities are demonstrated or evoked. Preachers will still have to be sensitive to differences in the congregation, but can be confident that they are touching everyone when they preach emotionally.

Background Conditions

Virtually everyone agrees that today's preaching audience is radically different in mind-set and expectations because of the electronic revolution. "This is a truism", says the "Report Of The Study Commission On Theology, Education, And The Electronic Media by the National Council Of The Churches of Christ in the U.S.A."[1] Richard Peace adds that, "electronic media have totally altered our modes of learning and communicating."[2] Exactly how people are different has been hard to document scientifically, though quite a few have hunches about people in the pew having shorter attention

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[1]"Report Of The Study Commission On Theology, Education, And The Electronic Media By The National Council Of The Churches Of Christ In The U.S.A.," Religious Education 82, no. 2 (Spring 1987): 162.

[2]Richard Peace, "The New Media Environment: Evangelism in a Visually-Oriented Society," Journal of the Academy For Evangelism in Theological Education 1: 36-45, quoted in Ron Kowalski, "A Study Of The Effect of Format Change On The Comprehension Of Sermon Content." (D. Min. dissertation, Denver Baptist Seminary, 1990), 2.

spans, and being conditioned for brief, rapidly changing, and entertaining messages.[3]

One thread that clearly runs through most homiletical books published in the past 30 years, and with even more urgency in the past 10 years, is that preaching must change its focus and format or else it will become irrelevant and possibly extinct. Richard Eslinger begins A New Hearing with the assessment, "preaching is in crisis ... if not terminally ill."[4] Edward Marquart devotes an entire chapter to the sad state of preaching by calling it a "boring banality".[5] He then gives eleven reasons why, in the words of Anthony Trollope, "listening to sermons has become the greatest hardship at present, afflicted on mankind in civilized and free countries."[6]

How preaching should change to address this television generation is a source of debate. People like Tex Sample and Michael Rogness believe that preaching must radically change to be more like television and fit the oral culture.[7] Others, like William Willimon and David Read take a more traditional, closed

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[3]See Ron Kowalski, 2-4, 45-47.

[4]Richard Eslinger, A New Hearing (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987), 11.

[5]Edward Marquart, Quest For Better Preaching (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing, 1985), 19.

[6]Anthony Trollope, cited in Edward Marquart, 19.

[7]Tex Sample, Ministry In an Oral Culture (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994); Michael Rogness, Preaching to a TV Generation (Lima, OH: CSS Publishing, 1994).

approach to experimenting homiletically.[8] Ron Kowalski preached a series of sermons that were divided into smaller time segments spread throughout the worship service and found that "the variable of sermon format had no significant effect on listener comprehension as measured through immediate and delayed recall test or content retention."[9] It is a conundrum that North America has been in a media revolution and the church knows it must do something, but is unsure of what that something should be.

One answer to the media revolution in society has been a revolution in homiletics, with new models being established. Tied to these new styles of preaching are preachers' names: David Buttrick's 'phenomenological approach', Fred Craddock's 'inductive approach', Haddon Robinson's 'expository method', Charles Rice's 'storytelling method', etc.[10] Attached to these models are the implicit, and sometimes explicit message that "my method is the best way, and only way to preach". The common thread among them is a rhetorical awareness of the audience, and a willingness to change methods to better reach the congregation. John McClure accurately criticizes the dangers of majoring in only one model, and insists that congregations are better served by preachers who are "adept in

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[8]William Willimon, Peculiar Speech (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1992); David Read, Preaching about The Needs Of Real People (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1988).

[9]Ron Kowalski, 160.

[10]See Richard Eslinger, A New Hearing, for a full explanation and evaluation of six current models and their advocates.

a variety of rhetorical strategies".[11]

Rhetoric, after enduring a period of disdain, has come back to the aid of homiletics. Thomas Long summarizes the historical relationship between these disciplines,

> Once upon a time textbooks in homiletics were manuals of sacred rhetoric, studied attempts to take advantage of what was known about human communication moving toward the goal of persuasive preaching. Then, along came neoorthodoxy and the rhetorical arts were swept out of the homiletical house in a wave of communicational iconoclasm. The preacher was to preach the biblical message in all of its strange radicality, and any attempt to make the message more pleasing or persuasive, to adjust the message to match the listening process was a sign of faithless anxiety.[12]

Now, authors like David Buttrick and John McClure are calling for a rhetorical strategy of preaching, but not as a rationalistic system of arranging logical arguments.[13] Richard Eslinger calls this "Hellenistic rhetoric"[14], which as Buttrick says, is a three hundred year-old style of rhetoric and preaching that is no longer possible because people don't think that way anymore.[15] Instead, rhetoric is now used as a flexible tool for analyzing communication effectiveness in speaking, writing, theology, and even scientific disciplines.

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[11]John McClure, The Four Codes Of Preaching (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 4.

[12]Thomas Long, Theological Education [ATS] xxv, no. 1 (Autumn 1988): 86.

[13]David Buttrick, Homiletic: Moves And Structures (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987); John McClure, The Four Codes Of Preaching.

[14]Richard Eslinger, 160.

[15]David Buttrick, in Richard Eslinger, A New Hearing, 133.

Classical rhetoric's categories of 'ethical' persuasion (the credibility of the sender), 'logical' persuasion (the order of the ideas), and 'emotional' persuasion (the experiential state of the audience) are being reestablished as criteria for measuring communication effectiveness. David Cunningham applies this rhetorical analysis to theology, and in most parts of his book one could even substitute the word 'homiletics' for 'theology' and not disrupt the original meaning, especially since he defines theology as "persuasive argument".[16] Since television is another major communication force and system of persuasive argument, it would seem quite possible and beneficial to study it through a rhetorical lens.

Rhetoric, television, and homiletics then, share the common concern of how best to shape a message to ensure audience approval and acceptance. While television and homiletics have radically different ultimate goals - preaching seeks to transform a congregation with gospel truth, and television seeks to attract an audience to consumerism - they both need to impact the audience. From the apparent success of television's impact, this writer concluded that it is useful for preachers to learn about emotional appeal from it, and yet avoid its commercial, marketing bias, and extreme pragmatism which believes that the end justifies the means.

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[16]David Cunningham, Faithful Persuasion (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 5.

Key Terms

1. 'Rhetoric', as defined by Aristotle, is "the discovery and use of all available means of persuasion in any given case."[17] A more precise understanding of the nature of persuasion is given by George Campbell, "to enlighten the understanding, please the imagination, move the passions, and influence the will".[18]

2. 'Television' refers to most network and cable programs that appeal to broad markets. Specialized events such as music concerts, government speeches, and pure information channels (weather, stock market, etc.) may not fit the assumptions and strategies of more general, popular, prime-time television. They are the exceptions to the rule. Occasionally, the words 'media', 'mass media', 'electronic media', 'visual media', 'entertainment', and 'Hollywood' will be used as synonyms for television without distinction.

3. 'Emotion' is not to be confused with emotionalism, which is elevating emotion as an end in and of itself, or undue indulgence in emotion. Emotion is the part of people where feelings/qualities like love, hate, joy, sadness, hope, despair, peace, anxiety, acceptance, anger, expectant, etc. are experienced. While dualism is to be avoided, emotion is more visceral than intellectual. It is related to the quality many preachers call 'imagination', which does not refer to make-believe, but the place where values are

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[17]Aristotle, cited in Edward Corbett, Classical Rhetoric and the Modern Student, 3rd. ed. (New York: Oxford Press, 1990), viii.

[18]George Campbell, cited in Edward Corbett, 4.

formed and held.

Methodology Scope

This analysis of television and homiletics is within a North American context. What television and major preachers are saying and doing in other parts of the world is too wide to consider.

A complete theology of preaching is not expressed here, as the focus is on preaching style and effectiveness. The power of the Holy Spirit to impact people with truth, the need for faithful exegesis, etc. are assumed. While this study approaches the humanistic side, emphasizing the technique, it is realized technique alone cannot change hearts.

Television and preaching within the same sentence usually have the connotation of telepreaching. This study is not focused on the merits and dangers of preaching on television; few pastors will ever have such an opportunity. But they will be helped by using the principle of emotional appeal in their weekly preaching so that in the end persuasion and discipleship can occur.

This is primarily a literary-based thesis, reflecting on research material already written. It will deal mostly with Christian sources which are already trying to update and improve church communication in light of the media's influence. Personal observations of the writer from his television viewing and preaching will be offered as illustrations, but not conclusive proofs.

Accepted in this study is the theory that senders construct

their audience and their experience of the message by the arguments used (content) and the way they are packaged (method). Accurate summaries of who the audience is, the biases of the sender, and how the sender is persuading the audience, are obtained primarily through analyzing the actual messages given, rather than polling the sender or audience for explicit answers.[19] Rhetoric becomes a tool for analyzing communication effectiveness; in this case the communication of television.

As a result, this study does not quote from scientific studies that document exactly how television has influenced the emotions and intellect of people. There are a few statistics hinting in that direction, but not exhaustive proof. One book outlines different test procedures for producing scientific data[20], but performing such tests is beyond the scope of this thesis, and better suited to a social science project. This writer assumes the generally held opinion that television does affect people in attitude and will; otherwise commercials would be a waste of money.

Summary and Organization

Chapter two is a summary and evaluation of some of the most prominent views in the primary literature used in the thesis. Beginning with an analysis of television's influence on people, the

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[19]David Cunningham, 68-69.

[20]Annie Lang, ed., Measuring Psychological Responses To Mass Media Messages (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum & Associates, Publishers, 1994).

review then turns to rhetoric and its chief components in effecting persuasion; finally, the field of homiletics is surveyed to see how preaching might change in the light of television's influence and persuasion principles.

In the first section, on television's influence, Thomas Boomershine places television in a historical line of media revolutions and concludes that television is the most monumental. Marshall McLuhan describes the perceptual environment as having changed from visual print to electronic all-at-once input. Quentin Schultze analyzes different genres of programs according to what values they implicitly preach. Ron Kowalski surveys the debate of whether people have shorter attention spans, and are conditioned against lengthy didactic messages because of television. Several television documentaries give the same conclusion as these authors, that the electronic mass media have influenced people by content and values, as well as by their attention-getting methods.

In the next section, on rhetoric and persuasion, a historical summary is given of rhetoric in the Classical, Enlightenment, and Modern eras. Aristotle and Augustine in the Classical era use triads of categories to describe how speeches can be designed for persuasion. Their stress is on using a variety of means, including emotion, to attract and motivate the audience. In the Enlightenment period rhetoric suffered as, under the influence of Descartes and Richard Whately, reason was elevated to be the chief appeal in persuasion. Consequently, it lost relevance in academic and popular usage. Under George Campbell, Kenneth Burke, and I.A. Richards, the

Modern period revived rhetoric. The experience of the audience was elevated, and so rhetoric became a a flexible tool to analyze communication effectiveness in many fields. David Cunningham applies rhetorical analysis to theology, using Classical rhetoric's categories, and establishes theories of how senders construct and shape their audience. His method is attempted in this study, with television and preaching as the languages to be analyzed.

Preaching is the theme of the third section, beginning with the historical relationship between rhetoric and preaching. Next, the views of people writing in homiletics today are compared, including David Buttrick, Fred Craddock, William Willimon, John MacArthur, Mark Galli and Craig Larson. Buttrick accepts the influence of television, and devises a system of homiletical moves to match shifting contemporary consciousness. Craddock also is concerned that preaching be according to the way people think and live, which is inductively, and primarily through stories. Both of them have specific rules about how to improve language, images, stories, and sermonic shape to please the listener. Willimon and MacArthur are more cautious and critical of those who change method and message to suit the secular listener, and they assert that preaching be distinct from cultural trends. Galli and Larson open the door wide to assert that whatever works in effective journalism ought to be used in preaching. Their main goal is to make preaching interesting, entertaining, and persuasive by appealing to emotion, and so practical methods are listed.

Chapter three is an analysis of television's messages and

methods. The commercial, financial motivation dictates the content and methodology of television. Television's main agenda is not to inform or better people, but to sell them advertising and thus make money. It is an entertainment medium, used by viewers primarily for leisure and escape, and not for information or persuasion. People actively choose their media messages according to their mood and values, and usually reject what is not personally relevant and stimulating. There is a variety of genres so that most of the population will find something that appeals to them, even though the plots and methods are virtually the same across programs.

Television sustains viewer interest through methods and messages that appeal to emotion. Unethical tactics, such as violence, sex appeal, coveting, and false hopes are used to grip people. Music, camera angles, special effects, lighting, rapid movement, short time segments, and many other techniques are used to heighten emotional involvement. Traditional narrative elements such as conflict, suspense, comedy, tragedy, fear, dialogue, character development, etc., ensure that viewers will enter the story through identification. Television appeals to felt needs such as friendship, love, family, money, success, and laughter, offering a sense of hope and resolution. On television most problems are solved in minutes, which is an unrealistic yet entertaining message.

A secular humanistic message pervades programming, which means it is more than mere entertainment. Sin is portrayed as something only terrible people do, not an innate problem for everyone, and

the answer is to eliminate such people, not extend grace to them. Happiness is in consuming and satisfying the flesh. People do not need God, they only need to try harder. Truth is relative to whether it makes one feel better and get ahead. Because such values are placed in stories subtly, the audience overhears the message and feels less affronted by it. Thus, they accept the message almost unknowingly. Producers know that viewers are sovereign and selective, so they are rarely preachy. Few demands are made of the audience except to stay tuned.

Chapter four follows these characteristics of television to see what influence they have on the viewer. Statistics abound to show how television consumption has dramatically increased over the past thirty years, making it the dominant leisure activity of North Americans. As a fixture in the environment, it ritualizes people's schedule and language. Its power to unite diverse, geographically separated masses around a program and point of view is amazing. The electronic media revolution is compared to other dominant media changes throughout history, and deemed to be the most pervasive and powerful of all.

Television is the major storyteller of society, elevating certain values over others. It has replaced the role of the Bible in terms of instructing the worldview of North Americans. It has elevated entertainment and consumerism as inalienable rights and priorities for all. Media producers deny any cause-effect relationship between viewing and negative behaviour, insisting that they preach no specific agenda except harmless entertainment, and

that viewers are wise enough to discern fantasy from reality. However, the advertising industry has evidence to the contrary, and children are especially vulnerable to media indoctrination and behavioral persuasion.

The all-at-once nature of sensory input from television has altered the perceptual abilities of long-term viewers. Electronic media extends and revolutionizes the human nervous system, so that watching television is not as much something people do, as it is something that is done to them. A diet of well crafted, flickering, emotion-evoking images has changed the appetite of people receiving information today. Shorter attention spans are evident, and so messages must be interesting, colourful, moving, and relevant to experience to keep people interested. Long explanations, detailed arguments about theory, static lectures, and fixed third-person points of view are unpopular and often avoided.

People are more sceptical about truth because of the thousands of ads they have to process, and authority has shifted away from the sender to the audience. Authority is determined now by feeling, and whether one perceives a message as being beneficial to his or her experience. Even information-type shows on television such as news and documentaries have to be packaged in narrative formats to have broad appeal. Other media, such as radio and magazines, have had to change their strategies to match the need for sensationalism that television has created in people. The subsequent question is, 'to what extent should preaching copy television's principles of emotional appeal?'.

As an entertainment medium it cannot persuade people too far in an opposite direction or too quickly, because it must remain popular and give people what they want. Studies of televangelism consistently show it does not produce many new converts, but does reinforce the views of Christians who are already sympathetic to their message. Some have concluded, then, that television is not very persuasive. Even though change in behaviour may not be quickly measured, change of attitude always occurs when emotional messages are received. The medium's power is in establishing what people consider to be normal. Programs begin by reflecting common values, but as they relay them on television, receive feedback as to which ones are most exciting, and resend the popular ones, persuasion occurs. What is first accepted eventually becomes expected. People use television for fun and escape but end up being used or shaped by its messages and methods.

Chapter five examines classical rhetoric's triangular categories of persuasion by *'ethos'* (the credibility of the sender), *'logos'* (the order of the ideas), and *'pathos'* (the experiential state of the audience). Effective messages must use all three components in harmony, yet according to time periods, cultural differences, and audience preference one aspect may dominate more than others. In the age of Enlightenment and in academic, literate cultures the appeal to logic would be the top peak in the triangle. Today, when speakers are competing for an audience, the character of the sender is crucial. Emotionally conditioned people in this generation need to feel the significance

of a message before they'll believe it. Rhetoric then, is not a science to fix practices in stone for all time, but is a method of evaluating persuasion according to specific messages, audiences, and occasions. It teaches senders how to discern what motivates receivers and to shape them through the proper arrangement of arguments.

Rhetoric and homiletics have the same concern in what persuades an audience. A historical survey reveals how they began as partners, but drifted apart by the middle of this century. Current homiletics once again sees the need for a rhetorical strategy. Various definitions of preaching reveal the multiplicity of purposes it serves for the church and the world, yet a biblical understanding of preaching always has persuasion as the ultimate goal. Biblical passages are rhetorical events/messages that were designed to do something to the original audience, and preachers need to recreate their intent and impact today. A message that merely delights emotionally, or informs intellectually is not adequate preaching, unless in some measure it influences the will. Such persuasion may not be quickly and obviously measured, but the cumulative effect will be seen over time.

Most rhetoricians believe that delighting an audience is the first essential step to persuasion, and that ultimate life change cannot occur unless emotions are aroused. Theology has failed as persuasive argument because it has stressed the *'logos'*, to the neglect of *'ethos'* and *'pathos'*, and traditional, deductive preaching runs the same risk. The greatest events in life when

people undergo major changes, such as spiritual conversion, marriage, birth of a child, etc., are surrounded by strong emotion. Explaining these events with theories, or trying to motivate others rationally to do the same, betrays the drama occurring within a person at a time of significant change. People in this media culture do not live by rules of logic in their mind as much as they do by emotional images in their psyche, and preaching must reflect this emphasis.

In advocating a stress on the emotions in preaching many of an older generation, or more scientific mindset, may respond with caution and even criticism. On one extreme are Hitler's emotional tirades that drove people into the Holocaust, proving that emotionalism can manipulate and damage. On the other extreme are passionate charismatic services which in the end bear little solid fruit, suggesting that emotionalism is fleeting and should not be used. Rhetoric promotes neither logic nor emotion as ends in themselves, but only as a means to engaging the whole person toward persuasion of the will.

A dichotomy between the head and heart is pointless. People live by theory and feeling, and these components continually inform and interpret each other. A danger of seeking to attract the hearer through emotion is that preaching could become too pragmatic and fall into the error of television that uses any means, as long as it works. The theological nature of preaching reminds the speaker that results are ultimately up to the Lord, and that each sermon is an offering to God, for His glory. The needed stress in preaching

today, though, is that the entry point for attracting attention and promoting significant change is an emotional appeal.

Chapter six summarizes how preachers can practically change their style to include more emotional appeal. The first step is to become aware of the emotional flow and stresses within messages, and Bible passages. Instead of exegeting a text for just the flow of ideas, a preacher should also analyze it according to the emotion displayed by the biblical writer, and his or her own points of emotional identification. A change of emphasis in one's hermeneutic is needed to read messages through this wider rhetorical lens. Analyzing sermons through the emotional quotient is valuable in becoming aware of what emotions the preacher is representing, presupposing, and evoking. When these are listed they can be evaluated in light of the emotional flow of the biblical text, the emotional state and needs of the audience, and the rhetorical goals of the preacher.

Much technique can be learned from television, fictional writing, and journalism about how to attract the contemporary hearer. The actual plot, or narrative movement, of a sermon is critical to promoting or resisting emotion. Elements of mystery, conflict, and resolution can be incorporated into all sermons regardless of the sermon format, though inductive does seem more natural. The content of the sermon has to present issues that are relevant, and therefore emotionally engaging. Even a typically high-emotion sermon vehicle like storytelling can fall flat if it majors in abstract theories that do not speak to the lived

experience of people. The subjects must be important in the hearer's mind. The sensual use of language will also affect the emotional identification of hearers. Creating images through words; showing more than telling; using dialogue, brevity, and eliminating cliches, are some of the many skills the best writers use in all fields of communication.

Ultimately, the most powerful way to create an emotional level is for the preacher to be this way. Feelings are more clearly caught than taught. Rhetoric's insistence that the ethos of the speaker is an essential element in persuasion is needed in this culture that is overloaded with trivial information. Emotional sermons on paper can become emotionless in the pulpit if the preacher does not fully enter the sermon. Delivery matters of stage presence, gestures, vocal quality, and timing, must all be analyzed to ensure they accurately convey the emotion of the Bible passage and written sermon. Preachers with unemotional personalities must guard against the negative impact of making these techniques appear contrived. Through prayer and meditation the biblical passage and sermon can move in the heart of the preacher, so that "out of the overflow of the heart the mouth will speak" (Matthew 12:34, NIV).[21]

The final chapter will summarize the significant findings, give conclusions about the usefulness of this research, and suggest ideas for additional study.

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[21]All Scriptural quotations are taken from the New International Version.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The goal of this chapter is to summarize and evaluate the most prominent literature that has contributed to this study. The order reflects the overall organization of the thesis, as analysis moves from television, to understanding rhetoric, and finally to making preaching more persuasive.

Analyzing Television

A very useful source for analyzing television from a Christian communication perspective is the Spring, 1987 issue of the journal, Religious Education.[1] Here, thirteen of the top Christian electronic media analysts have united to study what the mass media are saying morally, how the culture and church are being influenced by those messages, and what the church should do in response to this revolution. Thomas Boomershine places television in a historical context by tracing the history of media revolutions and their effects on religion. He lists the media changes as being from oral to writing, writing to public print, public print to silent print, and silent print to electronic images.[2] Boomershine asserts that, "the most powerful of these in terms of cultural

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[1]John Westerhoff, ed. Religious Education 82, 2 (Spring/87).

[2]See Appendices I, II, pp.151-152.

change has been television".[3] He believes that every period of media change requires a reinterpretation and reformation of religion, and though it will be a long, complex process, religious communities must pursue change or lose effectiveness in reaching the masses. His call, then, is for the church to embrace the electronic revolution and reinterpret its method according to the media.[4] Boomershine offers no specific data on how electronic media have changed the culture, or what the church should specifically do in response, only that historical precedent says to either evolve or lose out.

The tone of the other articles is consistently negative. Everett Parker says that television is out of control, run by conglomerates, driven by greed, and bent on offending Christian values. William Fore criticizes the passive nature of watching television, and concludes that as communication it fails because relationships are not fostered. The medium has much power, and uses it to oppose Christian principles. Neil Postman blames television for destroying the innocence of childhood by giving unfit 'adult' images and themes to them. A perceptual analysis is done by Michael Warren, who concludes that the nature of electronic images has affected consciousness, replaced symbols, and re-named the world through new lenses and metaphors. A valuable contribution is made to the study by James Capo, who includes an exhaustive, well

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[3]Thomas Boomershine, "Religious Education And Media Change: A Historical Sketch" Religious Education, 82, 2 (Spring/87), 274.

[4]Ibid., 269-274.

organized, readable annotated bibliography on electronic media and the church.[5]

This journal has helped this writer to become more concerned about television's power to corrupt society; it rings that alarm very loudly. There is almost nothing good mentioned about television, and though the church is urged to reckon with this force, the application of that is unclear. Strangely, what Boomershine warns against - resisting the media - is what most of the authors implicate by nature of their negativity. The significance of this work is in getting the church, which does not engage the culture well, to be aware of the electronic revolution, and willing to talk about it.

Marshall Mcluhan has been another voice stressing the radical differences electronic media have brought. He is best known for his insight that, "societies have always been shaped more by the nature of the media by which people communicate than by the content of the communciation", which became the McLuhanism, "the medium is the message".[6] He describes media as a new environment, and this environment means, "we do not live in a primarily visual world anymore" (the print era), but in an "instantaneous world involving

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[5]Everett Parker and William Kennedy, "On Control", 203-218; William Fore, "A Theology Of Communication", 231-246; Neil Postman, "The Blurring Of Childhood And Media", 293-296; Michael Warren, "Images And The Structuring Of Experience", 247-258; James Capo, "Annotated Bibliography on Electronic Media", 304-331.

[6]Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, The Medium is the Massage (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1967), 8. Note the spelling varation between 'message' and 'massage'.

all of us all at once".[7] In order to cope with this information-sensory onslaught people are forced to become data classifiers. This would seem to imply that today's audience is more cautious and selective in receiving messages.

On the nature and content of television, McLuhan says, "the television image does not offer detailed information... speech on tv must not have careful precision"[8], which is anathema to a literate culture. The implication is that television cannot feed the mind as it does the senses. A steady diet of this could possibly massage or condition one's brain and nervous system. A minor point in his writings is a critque of the immorality on television, especially as it fills children with lies and titillation. But it is on the structure and sensory aspects of televison that McLuhan has unique insight. His definitions of 'hot' and 'cool' media are that 'hot' forms, such as print, are dense with data, have high definition, and require little participation by the audience. Television, on the other hand, is the coolest form because it is sparse in data, and involves the audience much more in the process, not with information, but in terms of sensory impact.[9]

His writings have led both academia and the populace to reject

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[7]Ibid., 26, 45.

[8]Marshall McLuhan, cited in Richard Thulin, "Marshall McLuhan", in Concise Encyclopedia of Preaching, William Willimon and Richard Lischer, eds.(Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1995), 326.

[9]Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media (McGraw Hill, 1964), 32.

an uncritical use of technology under the assumption that if it works, it is okay. What the technology is, and what it does to people are vital issues to consider. Though Mcluhan did not write primarily for the church audience, televangelists, with their praise for technology, are a prime target for his prophetic arrows. At least two books have questioned his expertise as a prophet or a media man, and ought to be given equal time in a study of media technology.[10] Again, few specificare given that can help the church respond properly to the television age. In more general ways McLuhan says that everything has changed because of television, and urges communicators to stop "trying to do today's job with yesterday's tools".[11]

Taking a more specific, and message-critical approach, Quentin Schultze's book, Television: Manna From Hollywood?, labels television as,

> ... More than mere entertainment. Television stories serve the same purpose for American viewers that the Bible does for the Christian community, and the television programs have become our secular manna from Hollywood.[12]

Schultze analyzes different television genres such as soap operas, westerns, detective shows, and comedies, and concludes that they

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[10]Sidney Finkelstein, Sense and Nonsense of McLuhan (New York: International Publishers, 1968); Raymond Rosenthal, ed. McLuhan: Pro & Con (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1968). Glaring problems with McLuhan's terminology, presumption of knowledge, and ethereal arguments are listed in these books.

[11]Marshall McLuhan, The Medium is the Massage, 8-9.

[12]Quentin Schultze, Television: Manna From Hollywood? (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), the back cover.

reaffirm the popular view of life, and also elevate a secular view that ultimately destroys spiritual vitality. His assessment is that television has primarily a negative effect, encouraging people to be irreligious and consumeristic.[13]

A very similar approach is taken by Michael Medved, a faithful Jew, who is a film critic for the New York Post, and cohost of a PBS television program called "Sneak Previews". Medved offers a more inside look at the making of television and films, and finds much content that is abominable.[14] He also pinpoints a riddle. Why would Hollywood, which is run by greed, go out of its way to offend the Judeo-Christian values of the majority of the population, knowing that such films are never as successful financially as family films? His answer is that the most influencial writers/producers have an anti-establishment, anti-religion bias which they push on everyone, and that citizens have been too accepting of entertainment trash. He calls for all religious people to put their beliefs into action to save the culture from the moral rot of Hollywood.

Both Schultze and Medved say that the sheer volume of television people consume indicates that the medium has significant power in society. The medium is a large waste of time, and offers few benefits in return. The realization that, "the American

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[13]Ibid., 27, 34.

[14]Michael Medved, Hollywood Vs. America (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992); Hollywood's Three Big Lies, 24th Century Chinchilla Productions, 1996, video.; Hollywood Vs. Religion, Dallas: Chatham Hill Foundation, 1994, video.

lifestyle can be divided into three major activities - sleeping, working, and watching television",[15] means one third of precious life is being wasted. Again, a plea is given to the church to teach its members to critically analyze the messages and methods of television, so they will not be seduced by them. Cutting back and becoming educated are the ways the church should take with electronic mass media.

The work of Medved and Schultze has led this writer to spot clearly the secular biases and lies within individual programs and whole genres. Medved's cautious optimism about organized religion's ability to enter and improve popular media culture is a start, but could be stronger. Schultze does not go that far, adopting a slightly pessimistic and narrow view that says the church would better spend its energies on seeking to change itself.

He does offer an excellent survey on how the church has responded historically in using mass media to spread its message in, American Evangelicals And The Mass Media. He describes how Christians have been pioneers in using technology to take the gospel to everybody everywhere. Christian creativity and missionary zeal have fueled the growth of radio, television, newspapers, and book publishing. He describes how in the process of using media the church came to be used by them, as profits were made, companies formed, and marketing became a priority. In most cases of Christian television, the medium has shaped the message, and much of Evangelicalism is now a dangerous hybrid of selfism, consumerism,

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[15]Quentin Schultze, Television: Manna From Hollywood?, 8.

Americanism, and faith.[16]

A few other books have had a similar goal - to study how the church can positively use media in witness,[17] or cannot use secular means without becoming secular.[18] None equal Schultze's collection of essays, which is wide in scope by covering many media, and significant in depth by documenting actual cases, programs, and statistics. He concludes that the church needs to keep combining faith, creativity, and technology to impact the world, but now from a critical position, realizing that technology can be dangerous. This study fully hears this wisdom, even as it advocates learning from television about how to preach better.

Industry studies of how writers, producers, and editors intentionally manipulate images and sound to produce a desired result have been eye-opening. Most audiences believe in the neutral power of mass media, and are naive about issues like corporate interest, producer bias, point of view in editing, and rhetorical techniques for persuasion. It is especially true that, when a story

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[16]Quentin Schultze, ed., American Evangelicals and the Mass Media (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 13-19.

[17]Ben Armstrong, The Electronic Church (New York: Thomas Nelson, 1979); Stewart Hoover, Mass Media Religion: The Social Sources Of The Electronic Church (Newbury Park, CA.: Sage, 1988); Steve Lawhead, Rock Reconsidered: A Christian Looks At Contemporary Music (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1981); William Fore, Television And Religion: The Shaping Of Faith, Values, And Culture (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1987).

[18]Malcolm Muggeridge, Christ And Media (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977); Virginia Owens, The Total Image: Selling Jesus In The Modern Age (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980); Bob Larsen, Rock and The Church (Carol Stream, Ill.: Creation House, 1971); Michael Horton, ed., The Agony of Deceit (Chicago: Moody Press, 1990).

is emotional, many viewers think that such programs are produced in their best interest, and for their betterment. It is usually when one sees a documentary, or behind-the-scenes look at how media is produced, that the mystery and power of the art are lessened. This is what the videos, Constructing Reality, and The Thirty Second Seduction, do.

The commercial, money-making aspect of television means it must always give people attractive images, even if it is at the expense of useful substance. If television does not keep the viewer glued to the set, it cannot sell commercials to corporations. As a result, The Thirty Second Seduction says, television does not care whether people's minds are fed, or whether in lifestyle they are becoming more whole, but only if their interest is up and emotions are aroused so that they do not change the channel.[19] Constructing Reality looks at the power and techniques of film creators to persuade anyone to another view point. The best constructors of reality do it seamlessly, in an interesting way, so that nobody is too bored or offended.

Tracing the technology explosion, of which television is but one part, is the task of the televison programs Towards 2000, The End Of Televison, and a book entitled, Technopoly. Each source concludes that telecommunications has radically changed society and **everything** in it, yet the effects and costs of this revolution are

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[19]Joe Sedelmaier, a top advertising director says, "You have to entertain them first; the hard sell does not work anymore... Most ads fail because they try and say too much, and never create the right feeling", The Thirty Second Seduction by H.B.O. Consumer Reports Special on Advertising, 1987.

not yet certain. The issue debated here is whether society is helped or harmed by technology. Neil Postman is very critical of buying into the lies that more information will solve more problems. He concedes that technology offers some blessings, but the unbridled acceptance of it is dangerous.[20] He adopts a simpler, traditional approach to the world - the value of thinking, the need for faith, a slower schedule, deeper relationships, etc.

Towards 2000 and The End of Television present a balanced view of pros and cons, but in the end assert that newer and more powerful innovations are about to come through computer dominance (even the god of television will be reshaped), and so people better learn to adapt in order to survive the future. One sees a strange mix of evolution and fate here - technology is not something people can avoid; it is inevitable, and comes from some outside force. Therefore, one's only hope is to change with it or die. Debating such views or probing the wider subject of technology are beyond the scope of this study, which concentrates on the current domination of television. As suggestions for future study in the concluding chapter, these sources will provide needed direction.

A preacher's portrait of television is offered by Ron Kowalski in a D.Min. dissertation. He cites quite a few writers who believe the generation raised on television has a shorter attention span.

> Instructive is how television directors divide the content of their presentations into segments by cutting and fitting an average of twenty stories into each half-hour news program, and how they cut to a new picture

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[20]Neil Postman, Technopoly: The Surrender Of Culture To Technology (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), xii.

every 7 to 10 seconds in most programming.[21]

The writer's own calculation is that camera angles and new pictures change about every 5 seconds, and the pace explodes in music videos. The resulting perceptual change and "loss of cognitive ability",[22] means traditional lecture-type speaking will no longer be heard well.

It is an anomaly that when Kowalski tried to preach sermons in shorter segments to better match television attention spans, people did not measurably learn more. His interpretation of this was positive, suggesting that preachers can vary the sermon format without losing people, content, or meaning.[23] This is the first measurable study of a preacher who seeks to copy the television format in the pulpit, and begins to pave an important road for homiletics to travel.

The lack of noticeable change in people, though, suggests to this writer that the experiment was not thorough enough. Merely to change the time segments, and not one's language, use of pictures, use of story, and emotional appeal, is not a faithful representation of television in the pulpit. This study contends that audience interest and persuasion to change are produced by narrative identification, appealing to felt needs, and a high level of *'pathos'*. This is what television does well, and has become the standard by which all other presentations are judged.

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[21]Ron Kowalski, 22.

[22]Ibid., 119.

[23]Ibid., 160-161.

Understanding Rhetoric

Rhetoric is an ancient discipline for understanding the dimensions of communication and designing strategies to make that communication persuasive. In its beginning, rhetoric was used for public speeches, as citizens needed to learn how to defend themselves and win their case in court. There are three general periods for rhetorical study - the Classical, Enlightenment, and Modern, with each era having a distinct emphasis.[24] The most famous rhetoricians who are still quoted today come from the Classical era of 500 BC to AD 400. Out of all the important early figures in rhetoric, including Corax, Gorgias, Plato, Cicero, and Quintilian, the most influencial for instructing preaching are Aristotle and Augustine.

Aristotle, who wrote a three-volume treatise entitled, Rhetoric, provides the most quoted definition of rhetoric, which is, "the discovery and use of all available means of persuasion in any given case".[25] Those available means of persuasion are as varied as the speaker thinks they should be, in order to best match the message content and its purpose with the audience's state. Augustine, too, had a concern for finding the best methods of

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[24]Edward Corbett uses more specific categories/periods in his lengthy historical survey of rhetoric, but such detail in dividing the centuries is best suited to academic purists in rhetoric. Edward Corbett, 594-630.; Smaller, more popular, surveys of early rhetoricians are given in Thomas Montalbo, "Oratory: How It All Began", The ToastMaster, vol. 62, no.2 (February, 1996), 8-12; Craig Loscalzo, "Rhetoric", in Concise Encyclopedia of Preaching, 409-416.

[25]Aristotle, cited in Edward Corbett, viii.

speech that would please and persuade the audience. He argues for the necessity of delighting the audience, but also warns that it is only part of the journey toward the ultimate destination of persuading them to change and obey the claims of the gospel. The three components of persuasion, he said, are "*docere* (to teach), *deltare (to delight)*, and *flectere* (to influence)" - to touch the mind, heart, and will.[26] This realization is the basis for a wonderful, popular-style book on rhetoric and Christian communication by Em Griffin.[27] The Classical period is known for its listing of all available means of argument, and organizing of them under chief categories and components of persuasion. It was a period of naming and systematizing. In this process, rhetoricians recognized several triads of components that combine to persuade people.[28]

Aristotle stressed the need to appeal by *pathos* (emotional state of the audience), *logos* (logical reason), and *ethos* (credibility of the speaker). Seeking to persuade the whole person is emphasized in early rhetoric, realizing that people make judgements on different levels, and out of different motives. This

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[26]Saint Augustine, cited in Mark Galli, and Craig Brian Larson. Preaching That Connects: Using the Techniques of Journalists to Add Impact to Your Sermons (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 19.

[27]Em Griffin, The Mind Changers (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1976). He uses the analogy of making wax candles to say that first they must be melted (attitude change), then molded (intellectual change), and finally hardened (lifestyle change).

[28]David Cunningham finds this interesting, and even suggests some relationship to the trinity - a theory too fanciful to be explored here. David Cunningam, 39.

triangle of appeals has proven to be a universal truth, and has led this writer to analyze television in chapter four, and preaching in chapter six.

Another triad described the method of how to build a persuasive speech. Aristotle divides rhetoric into three components. The first, rhetoric proper, is concerned with the preparation for the speech, discovering the available means of persuasion. The second part is style, which includes language and diction, and which pays attention to meter and emphasis. The third part is organization.[29] This triad was then later expanded by the Romans into five chief categories: 1. the invention and/or discovery of various means of persuasion (*inventio*); 2. the arrangement of these arguments in a specific order (*dispositio*); 3. ornamental elements of style (*elocutio*); 4. memorization of the speech (*memoria*); 5. and appropriate delivery through voice and gesture (*pronunciatio*).[30] While these categories may sound quite scientific and even static (a usual connotation of 'Aristotelian logic'), early rhetoric refuses to be handcuffed to only one style of argument and speech.

The third triad explains the context in which persuasion occurs: as an interaction between speaker, speech, and audience. Contrary to other rhetoricians in his age, and especially the Sophists, Aristotle stressed that the speaker is to be a good person, who does everything possible to ensure that the audience is

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[29]Aristotle, cited in David Cunningham, 18.

[30]David Cunningham, 14.

being well served, and receiving the message.[31] Thus, in early rhetoric there was the formal understanding of audience sensitivity, which has become a timeless principle for all communicators to adopt.

Sometime after this, rhetoric took on two different negative connotations. Many shunned rhetoric as speech that is bombastic, devoid of substance, and manipulative. Others thought of it as a dry, rationalistic system of combining only logical arguments.[32] The first category implies danger, while the second one implies deadness. As a result, most current rhetoric texts now have to spend the first few paragraphs redefining and saying what true rhetoric is not, before they can articulate what it is.[33]

Rhetoric changed when it moved out of its Golden Age (the Classical period), and into the Enlightenment, and people ever since have been reacting to that change. Many rhetoricians chart the rise and fall of rhetoric's importance throughout history, and show how especially around the turn of this century rhetoric was virtually dead.[34] In the Enlightenment period, the application of rhetoric moved away from strictly public speech to include written

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[31]Thomas Montalbo, 10.

[32]David Cunningham identifies John Locke, David Hume, and Richard Whately as Enlightenment rhetoricians who taught these views. David Cunningham, 22-23.

[33]David Cunningham, 9.; Craig Loscalzo, 409.

[34]Thomas Long gives a clever, poetic description of rhetoric's illness, coma, and recent healing in Gail O'Day and Thomas Long, eds., Listening To the Word (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 44-46.; David Cunningham, as a theologian, describes the birth, death, and resurrection of rhetoric. David Cunningham, 19-26.

composition, thus influencing the belles-lettres movement. Further, the available means of persuasion became quite narrow, emphasizing the formal rules of logic and deduction at the expense of other components. Preciseness became the chief factor in persuasion. David Cunningham and Chaim Perelman blame Descartes in the seventeenth century as the main contributer to rhetoric's demise.[35]

Today, writers still refer to rhetoric as an outmoded form of communication that worships reason and bores people in the process, not realizing that this is merely an Enlightenment bias, and so far from the true Classical understanding.[36] An exception from this period is George Campbell's Philosophy of Rhetoric in the eighteenth century, which is identified by scholars as the most important treatise on rhetoric since the classical period. He widened the definition and application of rhetoric away from being strictly persuasion, "to enlighten the understanding, to please the imagination, to move the passions, and to influence the will".[37] He highlighted again the need to be concerned for the psychology of the audience. Campbell returned to Classical thought by adopting all available means of persuasion, including emotional appeal, and set the stage for Modern rhetoricians who were looking for wider applications.

Some of the prominent heralds of the 'new' rhetoric of the

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[35]David Cuningham, 19.; Chaim Perelman, cited in Edward Corbett, 629.

[36]Eugene Lowry favours storytelling over "rhetorical reasoning" and "Greek rhetoric", in Gail O'Day and Thomas Long, 109-110.

[37]George Campbell, cited in Craig Loscalzo, 411.

twentieth century are I.A. Richards, Kenneth Burke, Chaim Perelman, and Edward Corbett.[38] Rhetoric's revival is illustrated in how conversant it has become with other disciplines. No longer is it just an ancient system of public speaking. Now, as Long says, "Rhetoric is sporting some fancy new names like hermeneutics, narratology, communication science, and reader-response criticism."[39] Applied to the universal use of language and communication, Richards says that, "Rhetoric... should be a study of misunderstandings and its remedies."[40]

It is this type of analysis that David Cunningham uses on the language of theology in Faithful Persuasion. He follows Aristotle's view that, "Rhetoric is not so much an art or a science as a faculty or method... This makes rhetoric an excellent candidate for application to other fields."[41] It not only is a method of teaching one how to communicate better, but is a lens through which one can decipher and evaluate a communication system. Cunningham's theory is that the sender constructs an audience that is adequate to the communication occasion in the way arguments are selected and deployed. By choosing a certain language and style of argument over others, speakers include and exclude certain people from their

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[38]I.A. Richards, The Philosophy of Rhetoric, 1936.; Kenneth Burke, A Rhetoric of Motives, 1950; reprint (Berkely: University of Southern California Press, 1969); Chaim Perelman, The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argument, 1969.; Edward Corbett, Classical Rhetoric and the Modern Student.

[39]Gail O'Day and Thomas Long, 179.

[40]I.A. Richards, 31.

[41]David Cunningham, 27.

audience. Senders determine their audience just as surely as they determine the content of their speech.[42] Attending to the audience's state, and realizing that there are unconscious factors in their identifying with a message, are the main differences between the old (Enlightenment) and new (Modern) rhetoric.[43]

Cunningham follows this point, and says that deliberate polling of either the sender or the audience is not necessary to determine the rhetoric that is occuring between them. Appeals are given and received much more subtly than can often be articulated. Closing the gap between audience and sender, and becoming aware of their interdependence, are essential in the new rhetoric.[44] Cunningham says,

> By examining the structure of a rhetor's argumentative choices we can learn much about the commitments that the speaker holds, as well as the commitments with which the speaker has endowed the audience... Motives can always be assessed with the tools of rhetoric by asking, 1. what does the rhetor think will move the audience?, 2. to what authorities does the rhetor appeal? and 3., how Christian does the audience need to be in order to enter into the argument and be persuaded by it? (meaning, where are they?)[45]

It should be remembered that argumentative choices are not just formal statements of fact and exhortation, as in the Enlightenment period. But as Aristotle would say, they include all available means of persuasion - *'ethos'*, *'pathos'*, *'logos'*, body language,

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[42]Ibid., 69.

[43]Kenneth Burke, cited in Edward Corbett, 628.

[44]David Cunningham, 68.

[45]Ibid., 78-79.

physical context, silence, and many other factors. Becoming aware of the communication experience is the theme of rhetoric today.

Renewing Preaching

From the earliest period homiletics has been shaped by rhetoric. The most sacred book of sermons, the Bible, reveals that preaching is a persuasive act that uses various means to reach various audiences, for various effects. Paul said that he uses all available means to reach some (2 Corinthians 9:20-22), which is what rhetoric says also. Both Testaments speak in language designed to persuade, emphasizing the power of the spoken word. Not only is Scripture itself rhetorical, it is employed rhetorically by the church. The texts are read aloud, and then arguments are designed to convince the hearer to respond to them.

Two of the most notable rhetor-preachers from early church history are Chrysostom and Augustine (both AD 400). In their day, rhetoric was disdained in preaching because it emphasized style and because pagans used it to advance their arguments against Christianity. Augustine's thesis declared that knowledge of truth did not ensure effective communication of the truth.[46] His most remembered piece of rhetoric advocating the use of rhetoric is,

> For since by means of the art of rhetoric both truth and falsehood are urged, who would dare to say that truth should stand in the person of its defenders unarmed against lying, so that they who wish to urge falsehoods, may know how to make their listeners benevolent, or attentive, or docile in their presentation, while the defenders of truth are ignorant of that art? While the

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[46]Craig Loscalzo, 411.

> faculty of eloquence, which is of great value in urging either evil or justice, is in itself indifferent, why should it not be obtained for the uses of the good in the service of truth, if the evil usurp it for the winning of perverse and vain causes in defence of iniquity and error?[47]

Especially strong in Augustine's rhetoric is the goal of persuasion. The listener's head must be engaged, and the heart moved, but these components must not receive attention by themselves, for they are servants of persuasion.[48] Few have found fault with Augustine's reasoning, and so rhetoric and homiletics have been happily married. He created the church's first homiletic and set the canons of Christian rhetoric for more than fifteen hundred years. Due in large part to Charles Haddon Spurgeon and John A. Broadus, preaching in the nineteenth century was based on Classical rhetoric.[49]

That is, until Karl Barth came along and as Thomas Long says, "He gladly drove a stake into the heart of rhetoric and called upon the newly widowed homiletics not to mourn but to dance upon the grave."[50] Barth argued that preaching was to be other-worldly, not patterned after the media issues of the day. "It must aim beyond

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[47]Saint Augustine, On Christian Doctrine, Translated by D.W. Robertson, Jr. (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1958), 4.2.

[48]Ibid., 4.12.

[49]Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Lectures To My Students, D.O. Fuller, ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1945); John A. Broadus, A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons (1870). This textbook of rhetoric was one of the most influencial homiletics textbooks in North America.

[50]Gail O'Day and Thomas Long, 177.

the hill of relevance", he said.[51] As a lone ranger on the homiletical frontier, Barth asserted,

> I have the impression that my sermons reach and interest my audience most when I least rely on anything to correspond to the word of God already being there... when I least rely on my ability to reach people by my rhetoric, when on the contrary, I allow my language to be formed and shaped and adapted as much as possible by what the text seems to be saying.[52]

This led to a wave of preaching that majored on historical exegesis, orthodox sermon content, and orthodox sermon form. Imagination and audience sovereignty were downplayed, often resulting in predictably boring, didactic lectures.

Homileticians like Garrett Green, C.A. Loscalzo, Christine Smith, John McClure, Fred Craddock, and most notably, David Buttrick, are studying and applying rhetoric to preaching to make the pulpit relevant and powerful again. In practice, preachers cannot really avoid rhetorical concerns because they are purveyers of language and meaning. Even when Barth claims to be anti-rhetoric, he is using rhetorical strategies to make his case. Similar is Paul saying, "Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach, and not with eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied" (1 Cor. 1:7), and "I did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God in lofty words or wisdom" (1 Cor. 2:1). He was a powerful rhetor, but knew not to put his faith in the technique alone.

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[51]Karl Barth, cited in David Buttrick, A Captive Voice (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 8.

[52]Karl Barth, cited in Gail O'Day and Thomas Long, 177.

David Buttrick has caused a major stir in North American Homiletics within the past six years. In his massive work, Homiletic, he argues once again for a rhetorical theoretical system of homiletics. He differs from classical rhetoric in that he majors on phenomenological descriptions of the relationship between spoken language and what he calls human coming-to-consciousness.[53] In fact, he overstresses the precise arrangement of language to such an extent that he almost makes preaching an impossible task. His text is filled with rules that basically say 'if you don't follow these instructions precisely you will lose the congregation'.[54] Since most of his rules are not documented by scientific studies or proof, one wonders how he became the authoritative expert in how all people think. This is a criticism Thomas Long also makes of Buttrick,

> He moves to a rarefied notion of how language forms in consciousness generally - in everybody, everywhere, always... He seems to assume that each and every hearer is essentially alike....Buttrick builds his practical homiletic on a comparatively sterile base, the idea of people in the pews as a loosely hooked up collection of computer clones, all processing the same information, in the same predictable ways.[55]

What Buttrick does well is advocate theologically and practically an audience-sensitive style of preaching. He agrees that people have a new consciousness, shaped by the electronic, visual media, that doesn't respond anymore to the tradional,

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[53]David Buttrick, Homiletic (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1987), xii.

[54]Ibid., 34, 39, 47, 50.

[55]Gail O'Day and Thomas Long, 183-184.

rationalistic, point-based preaching. Preachers must take their cues from narrative formulas and camera techniques by designing coherent moves of meaning from differing points of view. The angle and arrangement of sentences is critical if people are to receive the message.[56]

His focus is on the effects of spoken language in consciousness, and the rhetorical strategy of arranging material for persuasion. Though he deals with the impact of television in only a brief, illustrative way, his stress on making homiletics learn from other fields such as psychology, phenomenology, rhetoric, communciation studies, suggests that television and other mass media could instruct preachers in how better to reach their audience. Homiletics must not only be wed to theology, but also to whatever other discipline helps us to impact people with messages.

One emphasis being made in rhetoric and preaching is the importance of the experience and emotions in effecting lasting persuasion. All agree that logic alone will neither gain the contemporary hearers' attention, nor motivate them to change. The listener's experience is paramount for Fred Craddock, and so he asks,

> Why the Gospel should always be impaled upon the frame of Aristotelian logic when... muscles twitch... and nerves tingle to mount the pulpit not with three points, but with the Gospel as narrative or parable or poem or myth... then perhaps the preacher stands at the threshold of new pulpit power.[57]

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[56]See David Buttrick, Homiletic, 55-79.

[57]Fred Craddock, As One Without Authority (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979), 145.

Craddock believes it is a sin to make preaching always deductive. The Bible's literary forms and the common experience of how people live, think, and feel suggest that inductive preaching is needed.[58] Leaving room for people to make their own sermons, and using specific, sensual images, will evoke the persuasion that preachers could never hope to manufacture deductively today.

Eugene Lowry accurately describes the impact of Craddock's method,

> When Fred Craddock's work, As One Without Authority, was published in 1971, a new era in North American homiletics was born. Certainly, it was not that he dropped a brand new bombshell on the homiletical world; rather, it was by means of a masterfully executed gestalt, he gave birth to a new mentality, beginnning what Richard Eslinger has called,'the Copernican revolution in homiletics'.[59]

That sermons should be an experience with the truth and not just a hearing of it, a trip and not just a destination, is now the cardinal rule of contemporary homiletics. Craddock's popularity is due in part to his engaging personality and preaching style, but more significant is his matching a rhetorical strategy to the *'ethos'* of the culture.

There are preachers who view Craddock, Buttrick, and the new homiletic negatively. John MacArthur labels audience-sensitivity as 'consumer mentality', and says that such preaching "falls short of God's eternal purposes in proclamation".[60] His answer to avoiding

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[58]Ibid., 66.

[59]Eugene Lowry, in Gail O'Day and Thomas Long, 106.

[60]John MacArthur and the Master's Seminary Faculty, Rediscovering Expository Preaching (Dallas: Word, 1992), front flap.

the day when "people will not listen to sound doctrine, but will want their ears tickled" (2 Tim. 4:3-4), is to return to biblical exposition. This of course is unpopular, and that is one main reason why it is right. MacArthur's says,

> The preacher who brings the message people most need to hear will often be the preacher they least like to hear. Anything less than a commitment to expository preaching by the preacher will reduce his (sic) sheep to a weak, vulnerable, and shepherd-less flock.[61]

MacArthur discerns, "a trend in contemporary evangelicalism away from biblical preaching and a drift toward an experience-centered, pragmatic, topical approach in the pulpit".[62] This is not an option for preachers, he contends. Even to call expository preaching one of several legitimate methods is heretical, for preaching that does not expose or reproduce the Bible is not preaching at all. To his credit, MaCarthur preaches a strong view of the authority of the Bible, and its power to change lives. Legitimating the expository method is also a valid goal, in this age that is searching for the right style. As a convincing rhetor in his own right, and with a national radio program, MacArthur is a voice for Buttrick, Craddock, et. al to consider.

A similar message comes from William Willimon, though not in as drastic a tone. He laments the preaching that seeks to please everyone, and in the end forgets it is preaching, the voice of God, with all its strangeness. While Augustine said that "delight has no small part in persuasion", Willimon instructs those who want to be

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[61]Ibid., xvii.

[62]Ibid., 23.

> ... titillated, entertained, or even reassured... to let them fly to Vegas. No, the baptized congregate because they have been called. So, when a parishioner is upset over the sermon I should tell them to direct their complaint to God. After all, I did not call you here this morning. The material I preach did not originate with me.[63]

This abrogation of responsibility and rhetorical intention seems so exaggerated that one hopes he does not fully mean it, as much as he wants it to jar readers (a rhetorical intention).

Willimon decries worldly language in preaching, asserting that it does not form Christian faith but he does not clearly define what that worldly language is, or offer any proof for the claim.[64] Positively, he reclaims preaching as an act of worship, whose main goal is not only to seek relevance in the world, but to build the church. The liturgical, communal aspect of preaching is here in strong form. His dichotomy of 'worldly' versus 'baptized' language is not only unclear, but in opposition to an incarnational theology and the pattern of biblical preachers.[65]

Offering a less theological view, but very helpful, practical tips for preaching are Harry Farra, Dwight Stevenson and Charles Diehl, Mark Galli and Craig Brian Larson.[66] These books stress that preaching is an art that should be practiced and improved. Typical

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[63]William Willimon, Peculiar Speech: Preaching to the Baptized (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1992), x.

[64]Ibid., 3.

[65]Ibid., 9.

[66]Harry Farra, The Sermon Doctor (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989); Dwight Stevenson and Charles Diehl, Reaching People From The Pulpit (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958); Mark Galli and Brian Craig Larson, Preaching That Connects.

sections include the powerful use of words, the outline, using illustrations, delivery and gestures. the preacher's credibility and spiritual life, etc. None of these authors are widely published, or could be called a major voice in homiletics. What they do, though, is bridge homiletics and rhetoric with tools that help preaching to become more persuasive. This focus is taken up in chapter six of this thesis.

CHAPTER 3

THE NATURE, METHODS, AND MESSAGES OF TELEVISION

The focus of this chapter is to analyze the nature of television and the methods and messages which make it so popular, while recognizing that any analysis of television will have some bias. From a Christian viewpoint, television is usually described as a negative force, but reports given by industry producers often only give a positive slant. A truly objective assessment could come only from someone who has never experienced television, which on planet earth is virtually impossible. But analysis must be done, for as Marshall Mcluhan stresses, "Any understanding of social and cultural change is impossible without a knowledge of the way media work as environments."[1]

By studying the new television environment it will be shown that, as a business, the chief goal is to attract and entertain the audience in order to deliver commercials to them. Exciting the audience is a higher priority than educating them. In rhetorical terms, television uses much more *'pathos'* than *'logos'* to remain popular. *'Pathos'* is increased through stories, conflict, comedy, fear, music, camera angles, special effects, visions of a better life, and experiences in which people can imagine themselves. This medium provides more than mere entertainment, though, for

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[1]Marshall Mcluhan, The Medium is the Massage, 26.

television communicates a secular value system. Many of the selfish and consumeristic messages on television are ultimately harmful, yet the error is difficult to discern when the images are so vivid, the stories are so gripping, and the tone is so nonthreatening. Thus, television is skilled in rhetoric.

Its Commercial Nature

The fact that television is predominantly a business surprises no one. This is a corporation which answers primarily to its stockholders and advertisers. In the middle of this triangle is the public, which is essential to keep money flowing between the three angles. There is nothing inherently bad about this, though the amount of money the industry generates and consumes is staggering; "$20 billion spent in 1985 for television ads in North America",[2] and "$500 billion in total revenues".[3]

Some critics, like Les Brown, George Gerbner, and Gregory Warner, do believe that "pure profit motives are in direct conflict with both morality and public interest".[4] Quentin Schultze echoes this thought by quoting Fred Friendly, "Television can make so much money doing its worst, it cannot afford to do its best."[5]

All businesses and even ministries need money to survive, but

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[2]The Thirty Second Seduction, video.

[3]Everett Parker and William Kennedy, "On Control", Religious Education, 82, no. 2 (Spring 1987), 208.

[4]Cited in Norbert Samuelson,"A Moral Critique And The Role Of Religion", Religious Education, 82, no.2 (spring 1987), 286.

[5]Quentin Schultze, Television..., 132.

in television it seems that profit is paramount, and bettering the world is rather unimportant. This realization must be kept in mind to counteract the hype of television slogans and commercials which imply that everything has been designed and presented for the best interest of the viewer. The truth is that television sees people as targets, whose only value in society is as viewers and consumers. Lloyd Robertson makes the insightful comment, "In the 1990s we are called consumers more than citizens".[6]

Robert Jenson further clarifies the nature of television when he says,

> The political structure of the media is aptly denoted by the usual label, 'mass'. The existing television and radio networks... are all precisely broadcast systems. The lines of communication run out from a common center... Therefore, the mass media can not create or foster a community. What they create and foster is precisely a mass: a collection of persons who have a common focus.[7]

Jenson goes on to explain how this very fact makes the medium inherently anti-Gospel, as relationships are destroyed by the institution of television.[8] Using his argument, however, one could also denounce Christian books as anti-Gospel, for they flow from a common center (author/publisher) and are usually read by a mass of individuals. A better conclusion would be that the structure is not as much evil, as it is powerful. Obviously, television cannot meet

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[6]Lloyd Robertson, Towards 2000 (CTV, Hajdu Productions, 1993).

[7]Robert Jenson, "The Church And Mass Electronic Media", Religious Education, 82, no. 2 (Spring 1987), 280.

[8]Ibid., 281, 284.

personal needs like a caring community does, but its ability to unite instantly a multitude around a message is a unique advantage of the medium.

While television appears to most people as a huge empire that nobody could ever change, George Gerbner estimates that at the center are "about one hundred people who determine ninety-five percent of what we see".[9] This should reveal to the church a tremendous opportunity for cultural change, if only the hearts of some of these one hundred executives were committed to biblical truth.

It is doubtful that the economic basis of television could ever change, but a more redemptive purpose could flow from the center if programmers were so influenced.[10] Michael Medved, a media critic for the New York Times, has clearly documented how shows can both uplift positive values and be financially successful.[11] Neither the structure nor the commercial nature of

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[9]George Gerbner, "Television: Modern Mythmaker," Media & Values, no:40-41 (summer/fall, 1987), 8-9.

[10]See Clifford Christians, "Redemptive Media As The Evangelical's Cultural Task", American Evangelicals And The Mass Media, Quentin Schultze, ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 347-353. Given is a description of how secular programs can be redemptive, or ultimately helpful, even if they are not specifically Christian.

[11]Michael Medved, Hollywood's Three Big Lies. He points out that four of the top five grossing films in 1995 were rated G or PG, and that positive, family style productions such as "The Lion King", "Home Improvement", "Angels In The Outfield", and "Christy" have made much more money worldwide than shows that offend common decency. He makes an instructive comparison between the two academy award winning films, "The Lion King" (rated G) which made $1 billion, and "Pulp Fiction" (Rated R) which made $100 million.

television dictates that it must be exclusively secular. The worldview of its creators, though, does play a significant part.

It should also be recognized that television is a tightly controlled and heavily edited medium of communication. Raw, live images that would blame the viewer or shame the industry rarely appear on television. There are so many control gates, such as: choosing the actors, rewriting scripts, producers' agendas, editors' effects, sponsors' demands, and censors' rules. What finally comes through to the home has been manufactured and manipulated on so many levels that viewers should never accept the images uncritically as important and true. An inside study of television production admits this very fact,

> All media productions are constructions rather than transparent windows onto reality. The focus here is on film language - images, words, sound effects, music, and silence: the tools that film and video makers use to create an experience for the audience, with an emphasis on the critical choices made in the process of constructing real-life films.[12]

What the receiver perceives as reality is an expensive, elaborate rhetorical construction.

In the "Report of the Study Commission...", one commission member describes the selective point of view within television,

> If we live in a global village, it is a strange village indeed. Though we live in it, we are mute and powerless. In fact, we do not live in it, we observe it, and we can exert no influence upon it. Even worse, we cannot decide what portions of the village or aspects of its life we will see or the points of view from which we will see it... These decisions are made from the frame of a television screen, by the values of a television

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[12]Shaping Reality, video, 1993.

> director, according to the biases of a television network.[13]

This depiction of television's commercialism reveals some radical differences between parish preaching and television communication; however, there is one point of similarity. Both make rhetorical choices of argument, images, point of view, format, etc., to construct reality for their audience. Preachers can become more analytical, intentional, and skilled in doing this by learning how television uses certain principles and methods to produce engaging programs.

Its Entertaining Nature

The common feature that runs through all television programming is the need to entertain. Television is sent and received primarily for leisure and escape, and not for information or persuasion. Very few people tune in to have their values insulted, or their comfort zones upset unless, of course, it is done in an entertaining way. Schultze notes that,

> Many of the more significant social problems during the 1950s and 60s were completely ignored in sitcoms. Worried about program ratings, networks would not allow sensitive issues to be addressed on the air... "All In The Family" was the first sitcom to tackle publicly taboo issues... It appealed to the sensational and controversial for its audience. The old-style comedy with its simple moral universe and happy endings was not commercially viable in the turbulent 70s.[14]

The same is true today. Unpopular or boring topics will be avoided by viewers, but shows that can evoke laughter and tears will

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[13]"Report Of The Study Commission...", 171.

command an audience, even when the topic pushes conventional boundaries.

People watch television to add relief, variation, or stimulation to their life routine. People actively choose their media messages according to their moods and values, and reject what is not personally relevant. Because it must appeal to so many different types of people, who have so many different moods and reasons for viewing (e.g.: to become gripped in a mystery, to laugh, to follow a favourite team, to be romantic with a spouse, etc.), television uses a variety of genres so that most of the population will be attracted at once. With a variety of methods, genres, and channels, the largest audience possible can be reached, thus fulfilling the commercial mandate of television.

Television is an entertainment competition, to see which channel and which show can capture the most viewers, which includes luring viewers away from other programs. Getting high ratings is the main objective that shows strive for. This means programming must always be changing, using new techniques, and more captivating stories. Phil Dusenberry, the creative ad director who produced popular 'General Electric' and 'Pepsi' commercials for television says,

> The two things we are faced with in TV are zippers and zappers. Zippers change the channel when they are bored, so we may only have a few seconds of their attention. Zappers program their VCRs to either eliminate ads, or they fast forward through them, and we then have no chance on impacting the consumer. How do we stop the zippers and zappers? That's easy - we make the ad so entertaining and riveting that they don't want to zip or

[14]Schultze, Television..., 58-59.

zap.[15]

Even programs that are informational, such as newscasts, can not survive if they do not present the news in an entertaining way. In the video, Constructing Reality, a producer from the CBC show, "Man Alive" seeks to create a documentary on artificial fertility techniques entitled 'Techno-Babies'. She admits that one of the greatest struggles is having to air an informative, complex issue. This producer says, "We are storytellers. The best documentary on TV is a story, so our main goal is to turn this issue into a story."[16] Evidently she succeeded in presenting the issue in an entertaining format, because CBC reported that over 1 million people watched the documentary - a decent audience size in Canada.

Much of the news that is reported is not newsworthy or necessary for people's daily life, and material that could make one wiser is usually omitted. The main objective for news is picking stories that will grab the viewers and keep them from changing the channel. Television gives viewers far more of what they want, than what they need. And yet, even the professionals cannot do it perfectly, for "at any one time half the sets are turned off, because there is nothing on the air that people want to watch".[17] This lack of substance, or "trivialization of the real",[18] has been the focus of many television critics.

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[15]The Thirty Second Seduction, video.

[16]Shaping Reality, video.

[17]Everett Parker and William Kennedy, 214.

[18]Ibid., 204.

critics. Consider the following quotes compiled by Quentin Schultze: "Fred Allen called television 'chewing gum for the eyes', Michael Arlen said 'every civilization creates its own cultural garbage and ours is TV', and Ernie Kovaks called television 'a medium - so called because it is neither rare, nor well done'".[19]

Schultze adds his own criticism, though he seems to contradict himself through terminology,

> TV exists not primarily to inform or entertain people, but to attract the largest possible audiences. Networks care less about how much someone enjoyed a show or whether society was improved by the program than about how well it did in the ratings.[20]

He is right. But obviously, if viewers don't find the show enjoyable and are not entertained, it will not do well in the ratings, and so networks do care about that. Parker agrees that television is entertaining, but not in an ultimately helpful way. "Constructive entertainment... anything that gets people thinking about values and ethics - is at a minimum."[21]

A paradox about television entertainment is explained by Schultze,

> Surveys conducted over the last several decades offer two seemingly irreconcilable conclusions - we are watching more, but enjoying it less. Every year people complain that TV has gotten a little worse, yet they watch a little more. Perhaps there are two reasons for this: 1. it's free (a pay per use system would limit viewing hours), and 2. it's effortless compared to talking,

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[19]Quentin Schultze, Television..., 7.

[20]Ibid., 12.

[21]Everett Parker and William Kennedy, 205.

reading, etc.[22]

A third reason could be added to these, and that is because television evokes emotional identification through attractive techniques, so that people enjoy themselves. And what people enjoy, they will keep coming back to, even if there are logical reasons why they should not.

Preachers can learn from television the importance of entertaining the audience, so that they want to keep listening, even though other forces are competing for their attention. Creating emotional identification ought to be an initial goal of every sermon. Of course, the ultimate goal in preaching is significantly higher than that of television. Entertainment is not the end, but a means to the end of persuasion and discipleship. Preaching can fill the void that television creates - a void of meaning. Deep down, people want to have truthful answers to live by, and not just titillation. Leisure and escape satisfy only temporarily, but values, ethics, and constructive entertainment nourish people permanently. By learning to preach in a variety of genres in order to appeal to diverse audiences, preachers can deliver what television merely hints at. Jesus proved that it is possible to give hearers what they want, not at the expense of what they need, but so that they can more easily receive what they need.

Its Methods For Attracting

In researching this section, the writer began asking friends

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[22]Quentin Schultze, Television..., 11-12.

and family members why they watch television, and why it is so effective in capturing their attention for hours at a time. Most gave immediate, obvious answers, such as 'it's fun', 'it's something to do', 'I like it', 'to relax', etc. But when asked to give more analytical answers as to what television does specifically to win their allegiance, most struggled for answers. This unscientific sampling suggests that average viewers are not fully aware of what is being done to them as they view television. They receive the shows passively and uncritically, and to do otherwise would minimize the suspense and attraction of most shows. Analyzing television's strategies is an interesting exercise for a while, but because it requires mental work, it can spoil the fun and escapism qualities associated with watching television.

Similarly to how a novel works, television brings the audience on a journey of emotional identification with characters, and imaginative scenes of a better world, without the hassle of using a lot of left-brain power. Traditional narrative elements such as conflict, suspense, comedy, tragedy, fear, dialogue, character development, etc., comprise most of the programs. Quentin Schultze believes that this is why,

> Soap operas have shown an amazing ability to weather the ratings storms of commercial broadcasting, lasting decades. They are popular partly because of the vicarious involvement of viewers in the lives of program characters. Women tend to look at these shows, not as programs, but as friends. They identify an extreme loyalty to characters that they care about. The genre is also popular because of their devoted use of the cliff hanger to leave the audience wondering what will happen next. Charles Dickens also used this technique in 19th

century literature.[23]

Clifford Christians says that one of the medium's strengths is the ability to convey intimacy. "Television provides a fresh capacity for the penetration of character, which neither theatre nor cinema possesses."[24] He goes on to describe how the actor's performance, and the close-ups of the human face, showing vivid emotion, enables the viewer to enter quickly the experience of the characters, to feel what they feel. The producer of a segment called, 'Techno-Babies' on the CBC show, "Man Alive", describes how the show was designed for maximum impact. Many infertile couples were interviewed who could supply the right content - their story about trying experiments to get pregnant - but only those with compelling faces, or the right tone of voice, were selected.[25] It is strange that through such an impersonal communication vehicle, viewers can feel as thought they know the actors. The ability of television to eliminate large gaps of time and space so that the viewer has a bonding experience with a show is amazing. This intimate nature of the medium produces persuasion by *'pathos'* and *'ethos'*. Even though the *'pathos'* and *'ethos'* are deliberately contrived, an illusionary relationship is established which the receiver perceives as real.

George Gerbner says, "Television's appeal is based on its

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[23]Ibid., 40-42.

[24]Clifford Christians, 341.; A similar explanation is given in "Televison And Preaching", Quentin Schultze, in Concise Encyclopedia of Preaching, 471.

[25]Shaping Reality, video.

intimate connection with viewer's needs and aspirations".[26] In every show, then, there are several felt needs being catered to, e.g., friendship, love, family, money, success, laughter, fear. Rhetorically, television favours techniques that will arouse *'pathos'*, and shies away from styles that require too much *'logos'*. On television most problems are solved in minutes - the bad guy dies, the hero survives, a better marriage comes after divorce, and the viewer is left feeling good about life. Everyone knows this is unrealistic, and even illogical, but because it appeals to felt needs of resolution and hope people keep coming back. In an ad for 'Buddweiser' beer, the director made it clear that he was not specifically selling beer in the ad, as much as he was selling American values and dreams.[27] The problem is that television does not appeal only to legitimate needs, but also to the baser and sinful tendencies within people.

Commercials are the supreme example of such willingness to persuade at all costs, for in thirty seconds they can create a feeling of dissatisfaction, and supplement that feeling with desires that they say need to be fulfilled. The Thirty Second Seduction lists the top techniques used in commercials as, being celebrity endorsement, sex appeal, promises of dreams coming true, and desiring the good life of ease, fun, and popularity. Joe Sedelmaier, a top advertising director says that,

Humor is a key method in commercials. You have to

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[26]George Gerbner, 9.

[27]The Thirty Second Seduction, video.

> entertain them first; the hard sell does not work anymore. An ad can create feelings, good or bad about a product. Most ads miss because they say, 'in 30 seconds I want to say this..., and say this..., and say this... They don't ever create a feeling.[28]

In the same video several directors were interviewed and all gave a similar response. Television must appeal to the emotions. The founder of MTV said, "the strongest appeal you can make to these TV babies is emotionally. If you can get their emotions going, make them forget their logic, you've got 'em".[29]

One music video producer described how the scenes and images are chosen for their impact, and not for their relationship to the lyrics or music. Schultze quotes the producer as saying, "The theme of the video is just male adolescent fantasy."[30] Viewers are encouraged to experience the shows, and not to think about them. The use of violence has been widely acknowledged as an effective attention-getting device. John Condry states that children's cartoons have twenty five violent acts per hour.[31] It arouses emotion, keeps the viewer attentive, and is an easy way to solve quickly conflicts that would require a good deal of production and screen time to be resolved peacefully.[32]

The messages are most powerful when they are least explicit

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[28]Ibid.

[29]Quentin Schultze, Television..., 123.

[30]Ibid., 120.

[31]John Condry, "Thief of Time, Unfaithful Servant: Television And The American Child", Daedalus, 122, 1 (Winter/93), 260-61, 263.

[32]See "Report of the Study Commission...", 179.

and seem more incidental. Indirect, projected ads work best, where people can imagine themselves in a future vision. When anyone tries to persuade an adult, automatically guards and defences go up. Direct manipulation is perceived as negative, and so it is discounted accordingly. But when the messages that are implicit are naturally woven into the communication, they do not provoke any defense mechanism, they just slip right in.

The writer's own experience of being seduced into an opposing point of view while watching a well-crafted television drama will illustrate this concept. It was a movie that traced a woman's journey from being unfulfilled in a bad marriage to finding happiness in an adulterous relationship. From all angles the producer led the viewer to believe that it was the best thing she could have done. Many benefits came to her and others because she found her true love. Undoubtedly, the producer did not set out with the intention of motivating people to commit adultery, and had he been so bold as to preach that message with second-person terminology to the viewers, few would have watched. But because it was in an 'innocent', third-person drama, many implicitly received that message, and for this viewer a small crisis of conscience followed as personal doctrine of what is known to be right (*'logos'*) had to counteract the *'pathos'* of what was beginning to feel right.

David Marc claims that comedy has always been the dominant ingredient of American television: he calls TV "America's

jester".[33] Laughing is a way of coping with the pressures of reality, and television wisely includes comedic relief in most shows. As long as the medium can make people smile, it will be popular. This is also accomplished in stories with a happy ending. Such comedy may not move an audience to uproarious laughter, but will bring a pleasant feeling, and sense of hope. Schultze asserts that,

> We enjoy TV because it is filled with this playful celebration of our humanness. Comedy can be serious commentary on our culture. It can reinforce prejudices, build pride, and harden hearts - all in the seemingly benign response of laughter. The best comedy is funny not merely because of clever one-liners or laughable characters, but because of the very structure of comedic story.[34]

Bill Cosby proved that the early style, family-based situation comedy (without putdowns, violence, or sexual innuendo), is a genre that will always be popular,

> The viewers like our show because the people in this family really love each other...They know that everyone isn't perfect but they're trying to help each other. There was something about the early style of sitcom that will not die - an affectionate look at our own foibles.[35]

Cosby's plots and characters prompted viewers to examine themselves, to see the log in their own eyes, and to accept each other as imperfect human beings. His show displayed a hope and optimism rarely found in sitcoms of a more pessimistic era. Several

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[33]Quentin Schultze, Television..., 51.

[34]Ibid., 55.

[35]Citing Bill Cosby, Ibid., 64.

writers point to the show, "M*A*S*H*", as an excellent example of combining the best techniques to match the feelings and expectations of the wider culture.[36]

Television appeals to short attention spans, and makes viewing an easy activity by using shorter time segments, and quickly changing camera angles.[37] The use of color, close-ups, scenery, make-up, music, special effects, and a host of other methods are used to involve as many of the viewers' senses as possible. A static, talking person would never sell on television. One sees a clear generation gap whenever an older person watches a youth music video. They often will complain about the frantic pace of the scene cuts and angle changes, and will feel confused about how anyone could find meaning in such an assault of images and sound. Many of the pictures do not have a logical or even symbolic relationship to each other, but they do speak to youth. Schultze says, "The flickering images parallel the nervous anxiety of our youth. MTV creates a nerve-wracking ambience that fuels the sensory needs of a generation raised on TV."[38]

Most of these methods are deliberately applied in the editing stage, which is where meaning and impact are determined for the viewer. The first stage in production is deciding what to present

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[36]Ibid., 63.; See also Leith Anderson, A Church for the 21st Century (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1992), 211.

[37]See Ron Kowalski, 2, where he says "TV program segments average 2-7 minutes in length and directors cut from scene to scene every 7 seconds on average." He also adds that a typical news program will have 20 stories within a half hour.

[38]Quentin Schultze, Television..., 123.

in a sensible way, and the second stage is editing, where the goal is to give the presentation maximum impact, or to make it a work of art. In the second stage, music, sound effects, narration, and many other background ingredients must be skilfully added to increase or reduce the level of *'pathos'* in the show.[39]

These are two stages that sermons must pass through: 1. exegesis and outlining to make sure that the content is fine and makes sense, and 2. illustrating and editing will detemine whether it will have maximum impact on the audience. Television constructs an audience according to narrative principles and high levels of *'pathos'* and *'ethos'*. Traditional preaching has been dense with data (*'logos'*), which according to Marshall McLuhan makes it a hot medium, so that the listener has little to do but take the information in. Television, on the other hand, is a cool medium because it is of low definition, leaving greater room for participation by the viewer.[40] This is the example that preachers should follow in order to become rhetorically powerful.

Its Messages and Values

There is no shortage of critical material when it comes to analyzing television's messages and values. Everett Parker says,

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[39]See Shaping Reality, video. In producing a segment for "Man Alive" they rehearsed matching the emotion of the narrator's voice to the visual images. In the 'Techno-Babies' segment on CBC's "Man Alive", the host Peter Downing is shown rehearsing the lines with several different tones and speeds for maximum effect.

[40]Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media (McGraw Hill, 1964), 36-45.

> The moral values that are being promulgated day in and day out through television and films are such that they contravene generally disseminated moral values of our democratic society, to say nothing about religious values.[41]

Most reports about television and movies denounce the wanton violence, sexual content, greed, coarse language, and stereotypical portrayals of minority groups. In this pluralistic society, it would be ridiculous to assume that righteous views could monopolize the airways, yet, in the name of common decency, citizens of all faiths would agree that television needs to clean up its act. Michael Medved quotes a survey done by Newsweek magazine which found that, "82% of Americans feel Hollywood is out of touch with their personal values."[42] Recent government legislation has been threatened in both Canada and the United States to force networks to use better warnings and control measures to protect children, but the programming has not changed.

While television is an entertainment medium, it must be seen as more than mere entertainment or a neutral force. It has become the most popular storyteller of society, and as such elevates certain norms and values at the expense of others. Television: Manna From Hollywood? states that, "Television stories serve the same purpose for American viewers that the Bible does for the Christian community... TV programs have become our secular manna from Hollywood."[43] The stories that are broadcast are actually

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[41]Everett Parker and William Kennedy, 205.

[42]Michael Medved, Hollywood's Three Big Lies, video.

[43]Quentin Schultze, Television..., back cover.

warped pictures of reality. Norberts Max Samuelson cites the work of George Gerbner and his associates who monitored the dramas presented by prime time television between 1967 and 1982. They found that,

> In the world of TV two thirds of all people are middle class, males outnumber females three to one, females are younger but age faster than males, and females mainly work in the home. The violence rate is 10 times higher than in real life. Most people are medical doctors, lawyers, police officers or criminals. Gerbner concluded that the gender distortion promotes sexism, and the exaggeration of crime promotes unwarranted suspicion of people and social institutions...These misrepresentations are a consequence of television catering to white, middle class, 18-49 year olds because of their purchasing power.[44]

In response to that charge, the industry claims to just reflect reality, and give the public what it wants; if any blame is due, it ought to be for the people who watch it, not those who produce it. Paul Verhoeven, director of the film "Robocop", argues the point with Medved. "We are artists. We hold the mirror up to nature. If the face in the mirror is ugly, don't blame the mirror, blame the face."[45] Medved convincingly documents and proves the opposite though, that the mirror is cracked and is not reflecting society's face at all. In real life the murder rate is not 1/50 as prime time television shows, by only 1/20,000, and people never cheer when such a tragedy occurs. In real life unmarried people do not have sexual intercourse thirteen times more frequently than married couples. In fact, they have it three times less. And people

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[44]Norbert Max Samuelson, "A Moral Critique of Television Values and The Role Of Religion", Religious Education, 82, no. 2 (Spring 1987), 285.

[45]Michael Medved, Hollywood's Three Big Lies, video.

do not feel cheated if they do not hear severe swearing every few minutes on the street. To the contrary, people pick 'PG' rated movies over 'R' rated movies two and a half times more frequently. TV gives more garbage than people really want.[46]

Schultze provides an interesting analysis of Hollywood's theology. By sensationalizing crime, TV created a rather narrow view of criminality. We associate crime with professional criminals. Sin and crime are not part of all of us, but they are aberrations of really bad people. The solution is to wipe out such criminals, not extend grace to them. Happiness is in consuming, and satisfying the flesh. What is man? Television's answer is that people are consumers. People do not need God, they only need to try harder. Truth is relative to whether it makes one feel better and get ahead.[47] Television producers are catechists, whether they realize it or not. Their arguments construct an audience toward their humanistic point of view.

It should be noted that morality on television is not just some offensive act, as much as it is the point of view. A program's point of view sets the context for viewers to evaluate characters' actions. The point of view across most shows is morally ambiguous. The benefits of personal faith are rarely exemplified, and yet in real life many live out of this point of view. Television reflects a world of chance and uncertainty, and ultimate contentment is

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[46]Ibid., quoting an Annenberg School of Communications study on violence, Planned Parenthood and University of Chicago's surveys on sexuality, and a Hollywood report on top grossing films.

[47]Quentin Schultze, Television..., 106.

elusive. On soap-operas, Schultze says that,

> Love is strangely absent. Instead, they are filled with selfish, egocentric persons who are more concerned with satisfying their own needs and fulfilling their own desires. They are forever caught in the storms of life. Happiness for the typical soap-opera character is merely the absence of interpersonal conflict and strife.[48]

Schultze analyzes other genres of programs on television, like westerns, detective shows, action shows, comedies, and concludes that they are all basically the same. They all portray individualistic heroism. The word humanistic aptly describes television, because each show looks to man rather than God for hope.

Though many complain about how bad television's value system is, especially when children are the viewers, the industry is very slow to respond, and viewers are very slow to change their habits. Things are bad, but not bad enough to start a revolution. That improvement is possible can be clearly seen in Canada's reducing the smoking rate by almost half, during the past 20 years. That was made possible by an honest analysis of the nature and dangers of smoking, a media campaign to encourage quitters, and the firm refusal by the public to keep breathing in a polluted environment. The same is possible for the electronic drug of television. Television is part of the environment, but that does not mean it has to be accepted uncritically.

Sociologists have a broken window theory. Whenever a building with broken windows, is left unrepaired, the crime rate increases

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[48]Ibid., 45-46.

in that area, and unrepaired graffiti invites more people to deface the property. The message of the broken window and the unrepaired graffiti is that there are no standards, violators will not be judged, for chaos reigns. Michael Medved says that television is society's broken window today, and to stop any further decay, posistive action must be taken.[49]

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[49]Michael Medved, Hollywoods' Three Big Lies, video.

CHAPTER 4

THE INFLUENCE OF TELEVISION

Having looked at the content of television - what messages and methods it favors - the study now turns to the effects of television - how those messages and methods have changed people. The fact that television and all electronic mass media have produced a major cultural change or revolution is accepted by all.[1] So influential is the revolution that it can be called a new era in history: from the oral era (6,000-10,000 years long), to the print era (400 years long), to the current tele-communications era. Communication expectations and challenges have changed considerably since the 1950s. It is imperative that the church, whose ministry is communication, respond properly to these changes, for as Marshall Mcluhan says, trying to do today's job with yesterday's tools is not an option.[2]

To understand this generation, and determine what are the best tools for today, this chapter will first study the pervasiveness of television to determine how significant it is in people's lifestyles and in the cultural environment. Second, the ability of

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[1]See Ron Kowalski, who says, "a cultural revolution has taken place because of the electronic media. Every facet of society, including the church has been revolutionized by television", 42-43.; and Tex Sample, Ministry in an Oral Culture (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), who says, "We are going through a paradigm shift of being between a print-based and media-driven society", 8.

[2]Marshall Mcluhan, The Medium..., 8.

the medium to spread values and persuade people to change will be evaluated. The next section will analyze the perceptual changes within hearers and how communication expectations are different. Finally, principles and methods will be established for how the church should respond to the electronic media.

Its Pervasiveness

Within 50 years television has become a mainstay of homes, increasing from nine percent of Americans owning a set in the 1950s, to ninety eight percent at the end of the 1980s.[3] An undocumented statistic was given in a sermon that said there are now more televisions than bathrooms in North American homes. What that implies about people's priorities however, is unclear. And it is not just in North America that television have moved from becoming an optional luxury to a common necessity. Barbara Hargrove reports that,

> Most homes, even the poorest ones who will do without food and other necessities have a t.v. or radio. The world is linked electronically. It offers to all a shared daily ritual of content, for the elite and the public.[4]

The number of television stations has risen from six originally, to over one thousand today.[5] The advent of cable systems and satellite signals has increased channel selection. Currently, most cable

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[3]Enid Waldhart and James Applegate, eds., Introduction to Communication Studies (Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Co., 1985), 175.

[4]Barbara Hargrove, "Theology, Education, And The Electronic Media", Religious Education, 82, 2 (Spring/87), 220.

[5]Ibid.

packages list up to sixty channels, and predictions are that within a few years five hundred channels will be available.

Greater selection has usually meant greater viewing time. In the 1950s the average was four hours per day, and in the 1990s it is watched seven hours per day.[6] Statistics vary among researchers and among differing age groups, but the averages say that television consumes twenty five hours a week.[7] The significance of that amount becomes evident when it is multiplied over a lifetime of seventy years, which means that people spend ten years, non stop, of their lives in front of the box. This makes watching television the number one leisure activity, and the third most important activity of life, followed by sleeping and working (or school). A common complaint is that there are not enough hours in the week for friends, hobbies, reading, exercise, etc. Television's invasion of people's priorities and social life is significant.[8]

The scheduling of one's day, week, and sometimes even year is regulated according to the demands of television. Children mark daily events like getting ready for school, supper, brushing teeth, and going to bed according to what show has ended. Adults will not attend events or host company at least one night every week,

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[6]John Condry, 260-61, 263.

[7]Michael Medved quantifies adult weekly viewing as, "21 hours in Canada and 27 hours in the U.S.A." (Michael Medved, Hollywood's Three Big Lies, video.; children's viewing ranges from "30 hours" (Quentin Schultze, Television..., 25.), to "40 hours" (John Condry, 260-61, 263). The highest figure is given by Schultze, "52 hours a week in the fall of 1984" (Quentin Schultze, Television..., 68).

[8]Condry's title is apt - "A Thief of Time".

because that is the night for "Seinfeld" or "Hockey Night in Canada". Others plan further ahead to keep 'Superbowl Sunday' or 'Sweeps week' free. When J.F. Kennedy was shot, the space shuttle launched, the killer of J.R. Ewing was revealed, the ending of M*A*S*H* was aired, and the 100 metre Olympic final race was held, most people were off the streets and in front of their televisions.

Family relationships have been altered because of television. Preschool children spend about three hours a week watching television with their parents, which is one tenth of their total viewing hours. That means that ninety percent of their viewing time is alone.[9] When people watch television together they look at each other and talk to each other very little, because television holds them visually and aurally. Although parents may be in the same room, close family relationships are not built if thoughts and feelings are kept private. Schultze makes the criticism that, "as we are becoming professional TV viewers we are becoming amateur parents and children".[10]

To some extent, the decline of Sunday evening church services can be aligned with the placement of family-style shows, like "The World of Disney" and sporting events together on Sunday evening. Church stories and music pale in comparison with the stories and music coming out of Hollywood. Even the division of rooms in a house (the TV room), and the arrangement of furniture have been regulated by the television.

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[9]Quentin Schultze, Television..., 25.

[10]Ibid., 154.

The average viewer may think of television as nothing more than a neutral instrument to be used for fun, like a guitar or tennis racquet. However, its pervasiveness over airwaves and in every home suggests that it is a more potent force, so that those who use it end up being used or influenced by the medium. In fact, their surrounding environment is altered by television's images, sounds, and messages; consequently, they and their world are televisionized. That it has changed the environment is supported by McLuhan, and he describes the effect as being, "an instantaneous world involving all of us all at once".[11]

Michael Medved likens it to smog in the air, saying that a person who decides to avoid television is like a person who decides to stop breathing. Though that person's own intake is reduced, the environment and everyone in it is still surrounded by the smog. Its influence cannot be escaped. As the boxer Joe Louis used to say to his opponents, 'you can run, but you cannot hide.'[12] Turning the set off does not fully liberate because the rest of the world has not turned it off. This is not to suggest that people should not limit their exposure to television, but only that its pervasiveness reveals ipso facto that it is an influential medium.

Its Ability to Persuade Values

The question to be discussed now is to what extent television can persuade people into negative beliefs. Though it pervades

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[11]Marshall McLuhan, The Medium..., 26, 45.

[12]Michael Medved, Hollywood's Three Big Lies, video.

people's lives, do they not have the discernment to identify what is a negative value and the will power to resist its adoption? Most people who watch something that they do not agree with intellectually or morally (e.g., extreme violence), will say it does not affect them, because they know it is just entertainment. Knowing it is fake enables them to handle it.

Average viewers would probably say that television is not very persuasive, because they do not act out what they take in. Nobody runs out instantly to buy the product recommended in a commercial. Supporters of television might concede that the negative values mentioned in the previous chapter are true, but that does not mean society is going to be any worse because of them.

George Gerbner is convinced that television is very persuasive.

> Television does for society today what religion did for our ancestors... People today live by the media, whereas once they lived by the book... Those who tell stories hold the power in society. Today television tells most of the stories to most of the people most of the time.[13]

Television reaffirms one's view of life. This has always been the role of public storytelling in society. The Old Testament Jews who celebrate passover re-tell their story as God's people, and so they solidify God's goodness to them. Christians use the Bible to tell their story, and so reaffirm their priorities and faith. In this sense, television functions as the Bible for millions of people.[14] The power of television as a catechist is documented by a study

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[13]George Gerbner, 8-9.

[14]Quentin Schultze, Television..., 19.

done by the N.C.C., which found that the overwhelming majority of people queried said that television is the educating force in our society.[15]

John Condry shows how children are perilously vulnerable to television's value system because they are more or less blank slates who can't distinguish fact from fiction. He says,

> TV is a liar... it is a thief of time... as a result, they read less, play less, and eat more. It exposes them to violence - first they become desensitized, and then more aggressive. It teaches them that consumerism is the main issue in life - wealth, power and comfort are the gods. TV focuses exclusively on the present, and doesn't lead viewers to think past to history or forward - long term thinking is not fostered. It is ruled by the clock - everything must resolve in an hour, which creates a false view of reality. And it promotes a wrong view of morality - it's not what is done that is wrong but who does it; only bad characters do bad actions.[16]

In California there was a legal battle as parents sued an advertising company for broadcasting on kids' programs a '900' number whereby callers could talk to Santa. Kids responded immediately to the pitch, and racked up hundreds of dollars on their parents' phone bills. The U.S. federal Trade Commission estimates that $2 billion each year is stolen from kids by creators and advertisers of such phone lines. If children see it on television, they believe it, and they act on it. Why would $200 million be spent on children's advertising each year if the industry did not believe in television's persuasive power?[17]

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[15]"Report of the Study Commission...", 163.

[16]John Condry, 260-70.

[17]The Thirty Second Seduction, video.

Of course, television producers deny any cause-effect relationship between viewing and negative behaviour, insisting that they preach no specific agenda except harmless entertainment. The argument that they merely hold up a mirror to society can be countered with a statement from Bertolt Brecht, "Art is not a mirror held up to reality, but a hammer with which to shape it."[18] As electronic artists they have tremendous power, and they know it, even if they do not admit it.

The video, The Thirty Second Seduction, proves from the mouths of producers that attitudes and actions can be influenced in thirty seconds. On January 22, 1984 Apple Computer ran a 30 second commercial on the Superbowl broadcast that cost $2 million for the air time. Within ten days they claim to have sold $100 million worth of computers, in large part due to the ad campaign.[19] Schultze reports a similar phenomenon when sales of Michael Jackson's "Thriller" album tripled to $600,000 a week one week after the video appeared on television. Apparently, 63% of viewers say that MTV influences what record they buy.[20] Michael Medved asserts that there have been sixty major studies done that show conclusively that prolonged exposure to violence affects one's attitude and action about violence in real life.[21]

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[18]Arlene Moscovitch, Constructing Reality (Montreal: National Film Board of Canada, 1993), 56.

[19]The Thirty Second Seduction, video.

[20]Quentin Schultze, Television..., 118.

[21]Michael Medved, Hollywood's Three Big Lies, video.

Television does more then carry messages, it confers power, legitimates systems, elevates certain values, while deprecating others. The medium can turn unknown people into celebrities overnight. Reginald Denny and Rodney King became household names when television cameras filmed their beatings. Anybody associated with the O.J. Simpson trial quickly became famous, many of them going on to appear on talk shows and sign book publication deals. Lloyd Robertson was voted to be Canada's most trusted newscaster, and so the public would likely consider even his personal opinions to be fact. Likewise, if an actor plays a villainous character, in real life he or she will encounter mistrust and even insults from people. All this from adults who supposedly know better. Everett Parker is correct when he says that television is the primary place where people receive ideas, where issues are discussed, where tastes are set, and minds are set.[22]

This is not an instant process of persuasion. As an entertainment medium, television cannot move people too far in an opposite direction or too quickly, because it must remain popular and appear to be pleasing people. Studies of televangelism consistently show it does not produce many new converts, but does reinforce the views of Christians who are already sympathetic to their message.[23] Even though change in behaviour may not be

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[22]Everett Parker and William Kennedy, 203.

[23]Quentin Schultze, "TV And Evangelism: Unequally Yoked?", The Agony Of Deceit, Michael Horton, ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1990), 189; Em Griffin, The Mind Changers, 150-152.; Stewart Hoover, "The Meaning Of Religious Television", American Evangelicals And The Mass Media, 235-237.

quickly measured, change of attitude always occurs when emotional messages are received. The medium's power is in establishing what people consider to be real and normal. Programs begin by reflecting common values, but as they relay them on television, receive feedback as to which ones are most exciting, and resend the popular ones, persuasion occurs. What is first accepted eventually becomes expected. People use television for fun and escape but end up being used, or shaped by its messages and methods. The following quotes recorded by Schultze indicate his concerns about this medium.

> TV is the first truly democratic culture - the first culture available to everybody and entirely governed by what the people want. The most terrifying thing is what the people do want (by Clive Barnes).
>
> TV may be grinding us down to a spiritual dust so fine that if a puff of wind scatters it, there will be nothing left behind (by Malcolm Muggeridge).[24]

Michael Medved performs an exercise where he asks the audience if they have ever seen a Lexus car advertised on television, and most raise their hands. When he asks if anyone has bought the car because of the ad, nobody raises their hands. The simple conclusion might be then that television is not very persuasive. Hcwever, when he asks how many would like to own the Lexus because of the ad, again most people raise their hands. They have been influenced, even if they have not acted on it yet.[25]

Part of the reason why television is rhetorically successful is because it shows people examples of desirable behavior, rather

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[24]Quentin Schultze, Television..., 131.

[25]Michael Medved, Hollywood's Three Big Lies, video.

than exhorts them to engage in the desired behavior. It accepts the selective exposure hypothesis, and seeks to give people messages they enjoy, or find themselves in general agreement with.[26] as that people have Robert Liebert explains that this is the most effective way of persuading people in the long run. He stresses that it is frequency and undertone in the media that are the strong forces in shaping values.[27] If someone has a drink of alcohol once a week the effects will be barely noticed, but increase the rate to once a day, or a few times a day, and certain harm will come, given enough time. In a slow, cumulative way, television changes what people believe.

It Changes Perceptual and Communication Expectations

A more pertinent question for Christian communicators is to what extent television influences how people think, and how they process new information. Has the all-at-once nature of sensory input from television altered the perceptual abilities of long-term viewers? The National Council Of The Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. concluded that people have changed, but "Insofar as this is a new phenomenon, we are unsure of the impact of the electronic media on people's perceptions, values, attitudes, and behaviors. We are unclear as to their effects on persons and learning.[28]

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[26]See Em Griffin, 50.

[27]Robert Liebert and William Kennedy, "Understanding Media: an Interview with Robert Liebert", Religious Education, 82, no. 2 (Spring 1987), 192, 199.

[28]"Report of the Study Commission...", 165.

Ron Kowalski sought to become sure of the impact in his dissertation. He believes there is a significant generation gap and conditioning difference between those under 35 and those above 35. He quotes John Stacey, who believes that the media revolution has shortened the attention span of most people.[29] As a result, this media generation may experience a form of 'culture shock' which could interfere with their comprehension of sermon content when they listen to preaching presented in the traditional format.[30]

Kowalski follows the advice of Kenneth Pargament and Donald DeRosa, who state that more information may be retained from shorter religious messages in which a few points are made well, than from complex, lengthy messages which are rarely remembered.[31] He tested the hypothesis by preaching six sermons in smaller time segments spread throughout the service, and then tried six traditional style sermons. Using questionnaires, he asked people which format helped them to better remember the content of the sermon. Surprisingly, listeners said that recall and comprehension were not increased by the television-style sermons.[32]

Does this mean people have not been influenced by the entertaining methods of television? A better answer might be the

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[29]John Stacey, "Will Preaching Go On?", Preacher's Quarterly 15 (December, 1969), cited in Ron Kowalski, 29.

[30]Ibid., 2.

[31]Kenneth Pargament and Donald DeRosa, "What Was That Sermon About? Predicting Memory for Religious Messages from Cognitive Psychology Theory", Journal For The Scientific Study Of Religion 24 (1985), 192.

[32]Ron Kowalski, 160.

realization that most details of a message, including news items, are quickly forgotten after they are heard. Part of the reason for this is that the listeners do not perceive the items to be relevant to their lives.[33] It is true that because of television communicators will have to pay closer attention to the format and packaging of their messages, but the goal is not as much to have short time segments, as it is to create interesting, relevant messages. People will remember what grips them, and what they remember will effect some level of persuasion on them.

One major result of the television revolution is that people are more sceptical about truth because of the thousands of ads they have to process. A documentary entitled, Towards 2000, exposed the myth that information technology is primarily a benefit to improve society and personal lives. Many authorities were quoted in the video who believe that the electronic age has overloaded people with information to their detriment. Derrick de Kerckhove of the 'McLuhan Project' at the University of Toronto said that accelerated stress and overwork have been the side effects of technology. He describes the 1990s as the decade of pacing, because everyone is trying to keep pace with change - a condition he labels as 'strange' (a combination of stress + change). Mcluhan himself stated that because electronic information pours over people continually and instantaneously, only to be replaced with newer

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[33]Ron Kowalski, p.31, citing John Stauffer, Richard Frost, and William Rybolt, "The Attention Factor in Recalling Network News", Journal of Communication 33 (Winter, 1983).

information, they have had to become data classifiers.[34] If a generation of listeners has become wary of receiving information, the church faces a quandary, since its goal has usually been to give people information about God and the Bible.

It follows that with so many voices competing for attention, the authority and credibility of speakers will be lessened. It used to be that if someone quoted 'Dr. So and So', the listener's attention would perk up in anticipation of truth. Now, however, with so many television doctors, lawyers, and other authorities, it becomes harder to determine who are the actors pretending, and who are the real voices to be trusted. The epitome of this elusive search for truth is seen in the talk shows (Oprah, Geraldo, etc.) where vital issues are never solved, because everyone is an authority, which means nobody can be.

This postmodern shift in authority from the sender to the audience has meant that messages are rated by how they make the receiver feel, and whether it is perceived as beneficial to one's experience. Prominent homileticians like Fred Craddock and Barbara Hargrove have accepted that television has created a new hearer. Craddock says,

> The power of the television medium is thought to have changed the shape of human sensorium from oral to visual. Moreover, there was a questioning of authority which resulted in a new relationship between speaker and hearer.[35]

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[34]Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media..., 12.

[35]Fred Craddock, As One Without Authority (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979), 9 , 14.

Thomas Long makes an interesting parallel with the switch to impressionist paintings in the late 1800s,

> ... as artists seemed to abdicate their artistic authority in favor of the viewer, to shift the responsibility for the creation of meaning from the one who painted the work to those who gazed upon it. Instead of presenting to the viewers a set of motifs and claims all worked out and ready for consumption, they invited the viewers into the sacred and once-forbidden sanctuary of creativity where only the artists themselves had previously been allowed. What caused the outrage in the French art world was the shift of attention from the artist's imposed meaning to the viewer's participation in the creation of meaning.[36]

Other artists eventually realized the shift was not merely a passing fad, but a new way of communicating, and so had better be accepted, even imitated. Television critic and theologian, William Fore, laments this shift.

> Today the individual tends to be the reference point for all values. This kind of secular freedom undermines human commitment since it treats everything as a dispensable commodity. Everything has value only insofar as they have utility for the individual.[37]

Since people are dulled and sceptical from seeing so many commercials, advertisers have to work extra hard to keep capturing attention. The response they fear the most is that viewers will say, 'that's boring, I've heard it all before'. This is avoided, say the producers, by creating moods and feelings within the viewer.[38]

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[36]Gail O'Day and Thomas Long, 168.

[37]William Fore, "The Church and Communication in the Technological Era", The Christian Century 103, no. 27 (September 1986), 243.

[38]The Thirty Second Seduction, video.

The need for colorful, entertaining, and experiential messages has been fuelled by the example of television. Haddon Robinson says,

> The preacher contends with ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN, ESPN, PBS, A&E, and MTV... Communication isn't what it used to be. Preachers address an audience that comes to church with clickers in their heads. They vote in the first thirty seconds whether to tune in or turn off the channel.[39]

"Sesame Street" originally was thought to help children learn more, and learn faster with its quick pace visuals, catchy musical jingles, and animated characters. Research is showing that such razzle-dazzle methods may actually make it more difficult for them to adjust to the comparatively simple appearance and leisurely tempo of the typical classroom. Because the cameras do the imagining for them, their own creativity and problem solving abilities may atrophy.[40] What television does, then, is set a standard in terms of the degree of impact and the degree of sophistication which people expect from communication. Rob Liebert says that television creates a person with a "'grab hard and capture my attention' attitude, which was not present thirty or forty years ago, but now has become the base line against which any communicator is competing".[41] Even information-type shows on television such as news and documentaries have to be packaged in narrative formats to have broad appeal. Other media, such as radio

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[39]Haddon Robinson, cited in Mark Galli and Craig Brian Larson, Preaching That Connects (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 9.

[40]Quentin Schultze, Television..., 27.

[41]Robert Liebert and William Kennedy, 193.

and magazines, have had to change their strategies to match the need for sensationalism that television has created in people.[42]

This paradigmatic shift has been labelled by Walter Ong and Tex Sample as secondary orality or traditional orality. Features of this mode of consciousness include subjective, informal, and narrative forms of communication, the use of proverbs, the importance of empathy, communal relationships, and learning by experience and apprenticeship. In contrast to this is a literary culture which relies on discourse, systematic coherence, clear definitions, and writing that can withstand academic critique. [43] It is estimated that half of the people in the U.S.A., and anywhere from one half to two thirds of the rest of the world, operate primarily out of a traditional orality. This means they can read and write, but their appropriation and engagement with life is oral.[44]

This is the generation to which preachers need to relate. Eugene Lowry summarizes for all preachers how communication expectations have shifted because of television,

> We have moved from deductive to inductive, from rhetoric to poetic, from space to time, from literality to orality, from prose to poetry, from hot to cool, from creed to hymn, from science to art, from left brain to right brain, from proposition to parable, from direct to indirect, from construction to development, from

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[42]Enid Waldhart and James Applegate, eds., Introduction to Communication Studies (Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Co., 1985), 165.

[43]Tex Sample, 3; See also Walter Ong, Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word (London: Routledge, 1982).

[44]Tex Sample, 95.

> discursive to aesthetic, from theme to event, from description to image, from point to evocation, from authoritarian to democratic, from truth to meaning, from account to experience.[45]

The only issue remaining is how the church can adapt its message and methods to such changes.

The Church's Response To Television

If there is one force that the church has continually struggled with, it is modernity and change. Debates and battles have been waged over whether to incorporate or resist such things as rhetoric, images and statues, musical instruments, the printing press, and the vernacular language.[46]

One reason why people fear and resist change is because of the uncertainty in knowing whether they will fare better or worse in the future as a result of the change. Hanging on to the safe traditions of the past often seems wiser than embracing a new movement, especially if that movement is as yet untested, and its nature is still being debated. Such cautiousness can be as dangerous, though, as the opposite reaction of rushing recklessly into uncharted waters. One solution is to study history to determine if similar situations and precedence can guide in the right direction. As it has been done in the past, so it may be done again was the principle the Teacher established in Ecclesiastes

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[45]Eugene Lowry, in Gail O'Day and Thomas Long, 95-96.

[46]For a fuller description of these tensions, see Ron Rempel, "Bibliographical Essay: Sampling The Dialogue Between Theology And Communication", Conrad Grebel Review, 11 (Spring/93), 165.

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Thomas Boomershine provides such a useful analysis for the church in his historical sketch of religious education and media changes.[47] He shows that periods of media change require a reinterpretation and reformation of religion, and that adaptation is the best response. One example is when the Roman Catholic Church bitterly opposed the printing press and mass distribution of the Scriptures, while Protestants appropriated the new medium and forever changed church history.[48]

Out of the three possible responses to media changes - resistance, capitulation, or appropriation - Boomershine advocates the latter. Unfortunately, the church has approached the television age mostly with resistance by condemning the medium, and producing rationalistic books and sermons as if they are more sacred. Equally disturbing are the evangelicals who have capitulated to television's method, and have distorted the Gospel and created public scandal.[49] There has been a strange love-hate relationship between church and media. On the one hand, the church opposes most of the values that the media spreads and urges its people to avoid

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[47]See appendices I and II for these changes in chart form.

[48]Thomas Boomershine, 270-271. From a secular, business point of view a video documentary makes the same conclusion - that any organization which avoids the electronic shift will die. See Towards 2000, video.

[49]Thomas Boomershine, 274-275; See Michael Horton, ed., The Agony of Deceit, which supplies the quote that 77% of Americans agree that TV evangelism has been harmful, taken advantage of people, and made a mockery of what the church should be, (214).

the shows and even boycott the sponsors.[50] Yet, because the church sees the power of the media to reach the masses, it has embraced the technology in producing films, videos, and television ministries.[51]

In both cases, it seems that fundamental questions are ignored. Robert Jenson asks the right question, "Of what characteristics of the electronic media should the church be most aware in using these media for their own purposes?"[52] This study asks similar questions, and finds that preaching must be subjected to a critical review of its effectiveness, as measured against television's enormous impact on North American culture. The application is that the persuasive principles of appealing to *'pathos'* and *'ethos'* can be created in sermons, just as rhetoric also recommends.

Certainly, the church must prophetically critique the media messages and methods, and train its members to view television with a new concern, so that they do not unconsciously buy into the cultural lies that are spread on television. And yes, Christianity

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[50]Yet, in reality, Schultze says that they do not truly resist, for evangelicals' faith has little effect on their viewing habits, Quentin Schultze, Television..., 12.

[51]This is what Marshall McLuhan warned the church against - rushing headlong into the world's technology, and not recognizing that television is not an innocent, amoral medium that can easily be matched with God's message. He believed that by packaging the Gospel into a television ready format, the Gospel would inevitably be changed by its format, thus, the medium is part of the message. William Fore urges the same caution, and says that "it demands theological scrutiny". William Fore, cited in Ron Rempel, 166.

[52]Robert Jenson, "The Church and Mass Electronic Media", Religious Education, 82, no. 2 (Spring 1987), 279.

must be represented on television to be salt and light for the culture. The style should probably not be that of the televangelists' moralisms and pleas for money. Rather, what is needed is constructive, or generally redemptive, programs that can persuade through narrative and more enjoyable, subtle techniques.

Besides these actions, preachers need to learn an effective oral style that is familiar with how people think and communicate today. Quentin Schultze asks, "How can preaching be reclaimed as a dramatic oral event?", and suggests that Pentecostal and charismatic orators have an advantage over virtually all other modes of preaching. These preachers usually offer the kinds of experiential validation and personalized storytelling that the television generation likes. The least effective method of preaching is shaped by dispassionate, highly systematic theologies associated with scholasticism, as in German Lutheranism or American Presbyterianism.[53] More practical suggestions about how to design and deliver sermons from authors like David Buttrick, Barbara Hargrove, Fred Craddock, and Mark Galli and Craig Larson will be detailed in chapter six.

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[53]Quentin Schultze, "Television and Preaching", Concise Encyclopedia..., 474-475.

CHAPTER 5

THE ROLE OF EMOTION IN RHETORIC, PERSUASION, AND PREACHING

Christianity is about community and communication; both characteristics come from the same root word. Communication first creates the community, and then the community proceeds in communication. Its chief form of communication has always been the spoken word, with an emphasis on speaking well - of speaking of doctrine correctly, and of lifting voices in praise in a manner befitting God. Even in the electronic visual revolution the most important activities of worship continue to be oral and aural - reading scripture, singing, prayers, preaching, pronouncing a benediction.[1] The ultimate goal of all this speaking is to glorify God, and to bring him the praise he deserves. The penultimate goal of Christian language is to persuade all people (inside and outside of the church) to join in the praise through changed lives. How words can be combined and energized to bring about persuasion is the scope of preaching and rhetoric.

This chapter begins by defining rhetoric - what it is and what it is not, along with a summary of rhetoric's chief components, theories, and methods of persuasion. Intellectual, emotional, ethical, and communal factors must all be used in persuasion, but specific emphases will need to change according to time, culture,

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[1]David Cunningham, 36-37.

audience expectation, and desired result. The relationship between preaching and rhetoric will be surveyed, and the need for persuasive preaching will be affirmed. Next, the study will concentrate on the power of emotion to create and sustain interest, readjust values, and move the will. Finally, argument will be made for the balanced use of emotion, intellect, and personal authority in persuasion.

What Rhetoric Teaches About Persuasion

The word 'rhetoric' is often misconstrued because of pejorative use in contemporary contexts. News commentators often describe a speech that lacks substantive content as 'mere rhetoric'. In this usage, the implied definition of rhetoric is 'insincere or forceful language used to mislead an audience'. In common speech, adjectives placed before the term often color its meaning, e.g., 'fiery rhetoric', 'empty rhetoric', 'foolish rhetoric'. One textbook has listed four myths which have contributed significantly to this negative connotation. They are:

> 1. flowery, excessively ornamental language, 2. mere appearance, rather than reality, 3. concern only with style and delivery, 4. inclusive of every possible form of communication.[2]

It was this understanding of the term that caused Socrates to be against rhetoric because he said it relied on "shallow knowledge,

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[2]James Golden, Goodwin Berquist and William Coleman, The Rhetoric Of Western Thought, 2nd ed. (Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt, 1978) 3, cited in David Cunningham, 9.

sophistical reasoning, and bad tactics".[3]

Etymologically, the word simply means 'the use or manipulation of words', from the Greek words, *'rhema'* (word) and *'eirow'* (I say). Proper definitions include: "The art, study, or skill of using language effectively and persuasively"[4]; "The discovery and use of all the available means of persuasion in any given case"[5]; "Bene dicendi scientia - a special knowledge about speaking well"[6]; or more succinctly, "The art of persuasive speech".[7]

Classical rhetoric began in the fifth century B.C. and was a system of training orators who had to defend themselves or others in court. It was chiefly applied to speeches designed to persuade someone's heart, mind, and will. Corbett explains that rhetoric "has traditionally been concerned with those instances of formal, premeditated, sustained monologue, in which a person seeks to exert an effect on an audience".[8] Rhetoric has always asked, 'how can a speaker appeal to the audience so as to best persuade them to the goals of the speaker, and how can one design strategies to accomplish this?' The two most important classical rhetoricians whom homiletics has consulted are Aristotle (350 BC) and Augustine (AD 400)

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[3]Socrates, cited in Edward Corbett, 99.

[4]Craig Loscalzo, "Rhetoric", Concise Encyclopedia..., 409.

[5]Aristotle, cited in Edward Corbett, viii.

[6]Quintilian, cited in David Cunningham, 13.

[7]Edward Corbett, 32.

[8]Ibid., 3.

(AD 400)

By definition, rhetoric is a flexible system that considers many facets for improving communication. Until the eighteenth century, the scope of rhetoric was oral speeches, but then the Age of Science and Reason used it in written language.[9] That it came to be known after this as predominantly an outdated, rationalistic system of ordering logic and propositions is unfortunate. Thomas Long traces how rhetoric had nearly died in academia and in popular usage by the 1950s, encouraged in part by Karl Barth. But recently, rhetoric has made a remarkable recovery, "rising clear-eyed, and lucid from the death bed, and sporting some fancy new names like hermeneutics, narratology, communication science, and reader-response criticism".[10]

The current understanding, though some are still unaware of it, is that rhetoric is not a science that fixes rules in stone for all time, but rather a tool for evaluating persuasion according to message content, emotion, audience need, occasion, and intended results. Cunningham quotes Aristotle as saying that it is "a faculty or method", and as such is an excellent candidate for application to other fields.[11] Craig Loscalzo adds that rhetorical theories are not "a one-size-fits-all enterprise".[12] He then goes on to discuss the importance of applied rhetoric today,

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[9]Craig Loscalzo, 413.

[10]Thomas Long, in Gail O'Day and Thomas Long, 179.

[11]Aristotle, cited in David Cunningham, 27.

[12]Craig Loscalzo, 414.

> Contemporary rhetorical studies have broadened the definition of rhetoric beyond analyses of persuasion and general theories of human communication. Contemporary rhetoric sees purposive symbolic action in such diverse subjects as art, architecture, creative dance, and music. The visual arts have become fertile ground for the study of rhetorical effect. Contemporary society, so profusely influenced by visual media will be sorely misunderstood if rhetorical scholars fail to consider the rhetorical effects of the use of visual symbols on communicative processes.[13]

To this insight the writer adds his 'amen', and to this challenge he offers this study of the rhetorical effects of television on communication. Corbett analyzes the history of rhetoric and concludes that,

> There is usually a resurgence of rhetoric during periods of violent social upheaval. Whenever the old order is passing away, and the new order is marching or stumbling in, a loud clear call goes up for the services of the one skilled in words.[14]

In this period of upheaval, media change, and paradigm shift, it is no wonder that rhetoric is alive and informing many disciplines, including homiletics.

What has not changed in twenty four centuries of rhetoric is the fact that persuasion happens in three ways, or on three levels: *ethos* (the credibility of the sender), *logos* (the order of the ideas), and *pathos* (the experiential state of the audience). It is a fallacy to believe that persuasion will happen if a speaker excels in only one of these ways, and neglects the other two. Corbett gives the same enjoinder,

One of the most salutary lessons that has come down to us

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[13]Ibid., 413.

[14]Edward Corbett, 32.

> from Greek rhetoricians is that unless we treat man (sic) as an integrated complex of intellect, will, passions, and physicality, we shall not produce whole men (sic).[15]

Traditionally, the *logos* has been emphasized, believing that if a sender uses the best arguments he or she will be persuasive. Edward Corbett and Maxine Hairston are two of many rhetoricians who in their textbooks include multiple chapters and exercises on modes of argument, syllogisms, errors of logic, and outlining of topics.[16] By making these topics such a significant part of their books (60%-80%), these authors seem to imply that if one has the right answers, and delivers them in the right way, then they will be received by the audience in the right way. Communicators have often been surprised to find out that the opposite may be true - what the audience hears can be quite different from what the speaker said.

A renewed appreciation of the audience is one of the hallmarks of the 'new' rhetoric. William Fore describes how communication theory has "moved away from the mechanical model of information/transmitter//signal/receiver/audience, to models that include multiple relationships as being interconnected, both past and future".[17] This flexible understanding of communication is what Classical rhetoric held to, but since the Enlightenment period

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[15]Ibid., viii.

[16]Edward Corbett.; Maxine Hairston, A Contemporary Rhetoric, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Miffin Company, 1978).

[17]William Fore, "A Theology of Communication" Religious Education, 82, 2 (Spring/87), 234.

Cunningham judges that, "The specificity and uniqueness of the audience has gradually been replaced by the assumption that arguments are universal and self evident."[18] Buttrick accepts the difficulty of appealing to a diverse audience, but says that everyone who has a body is basically alike because they all have needs.[19] Becoming sensitive to audience differences and yet knowing how to speak to their commonness requires rhetorical wisdom.

One doctrine that rhetoric and communication theory agree on is that "The meaning of words are in part in people, and not totally in words."[20] William Fore echoes the same thought when he says, "It is not the words or content or things in themselves which are revelatory, but the relationships of meaning which are communicated."[21] This means that rhetoric differs from logic, which focuses on rules of logical inference as the ultimate arbiter of truth. Rhetorical arguments must have access to a much wider range of appeals because of the variations among those who will sit in judgement. If the audience to which an argument is directed judges

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[18]David Cunningham, 52. Aristotle emphasized the speaker's knowledge of the audience and how audience emotions might be ethically aroused to effect communication and persuasion. See Craig Loscalzo, 409.

[19]David Buttrick, in Gail O'Day and Thomas Long, 190.

[20]Enid Waldhart and James Applegate, 48.

[21]William Fore, "A Theology of Communication...", 241. Fore adds that, "Audience passive theories of communication are open to criticism because they do not account for human beings as active in a relationship which involves persons or things, a relationship in which they are an integral part. Communication is the process by which relationships are established, modified or terminated through the increase or reduction of meaning. Therefore, passive, and communication are incompatible terms." Ibid., 231.

it to be a failure, it fails, however logically coherent it may be. By rhetorical standards, an argument succeeds only when the audience is persuaded.[22] That is why Corbett counsels rhetors, "One who seeks to persuade a select audience must first learn of the generally held opinions in that group."[23]

How does one know when the differences of an audience have been negotiated, their needs met, and persuasion has occurred? Just as messages are designed to appeal to the whole person - head, heart, and will - so must each factor be evaluated. Surveys usually focus on memory and comprehension, as if they were the only factors in persuasion. Ron Kowalski performed such a survey on his congregation to see if the new media-inspired form of preaching will work better. He clearly states that he was testing for comprehension and recall.[24] Waldhart and Applegate would agree with such a test, for they also teach that "information received from the senses involves four aspects - attention, perception, comprehension, and retention."[25] To be sure, if one cannot remember something, it will be hard to consciously act on it, and yet memory alone is not a full measure of persuasion.

Take, for instance, the many who hear sermons and cannot

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[22]David Cunningham, 44.

[23]Edward Corbett, 74.

[24]Ron Kowalski, 6. He believes that "If content can't be recalled or comprehended then it can't change attitudes or effect persuasion. Unremembered content can have little effect on the listener's choices." Ibid., 28.

[25]Enid Waldhart and James Applegate, 19.

remember what they were about one day, or one week, later. Does this mean that sermons are ineffective in their persuasion, since few people can pass a recall and comprehension test? No, all it does is confirm that people who are bombarded by information must let go of details that they do not perceive as being immediately necessary to their lives. Perhaps the message was too similar in structure and content to be interesting enough to try to remember. Or, maybe, the perceived distance may have been too great, so that the message appeared too hard to focus on, and thus was irrelevant. Recall and comprehension alone are not the best factors for evaluating persuasion.

Scripture and common sense make it clear that one can remember and answer the right questions and still not be persuaded to believe or live differently.[26] Em Griffin uses a well known triad in rhetoric when he says,

> Significant persuasion involves three steps: melt, mould, and make hard... Attitudes have three facets - what a person, thinks, feels, and plans to do. More technically, they are referred to as cognitive belief, emotional affect, and behavioral intention.[27]

Evaluating whether persuasion is successful is a difficult process, especially since values and actions rarely change instantly. One would need to follow a test group for a considerable time, and design questions that get to the root of how they think, feel, and

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[26]Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to me 'Lord, Lord', will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." (Matt. 7:21). The parable of the Sower makes it clear that genuine change is long-term and produces fruit. It is not merely an emotional or logical response (Matt. 13:1-23).

[27]Em Griffin, 4, 15.

act differently because of the original message. Also, some may follow a course of action and appear to be persuaded, but be doing so for external and shallow reasons. Children can be punished into conforming outwardly to a parent's wish, but if the values are not changed the child has not truly grown or learned the lesson. Full persuasion involves cognitive, attitudinal, and lifestyle change, and is rarely instantaneous, despite what most televangelists portray.

'*Logos*', by itself is unable to persuade people. All smokers know the facts that cigarettes are dangerous, so more information is not their crying need. At some point their emotions must be stirred enough to act, and someone they respect must have an entrance into their decision making capabilities. Effective communication is not just the transference of the right words, but the transference of meaning. And for meaning to be possible, Waldhart and Applegate say a message must pass three tests:

> It must be 1. easy to understand, 2. novel, and 3. fit generally what we believe. If it does all three a person enjoys a pleasant feeling. If it doesn't it is perceived as threatening and causing anxiety.[28]

Kenneth Burke explains that this process of identification can be substantive or formal,

> A substantive approach would pay particular attention to the emotional appeals that Aristotle outlines; the speaker would magnify or reduce a particular aspect of the audience's state or experience in order to bring the audience closer to his own position. A formal appeal would make use of Aristotle's *topoi*; the audience would come to identify with the speaker through a shared appreciation for a formal device (like oppositions,

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[28]Enid Waldhart and James Applegate, 33.

> climax, consecutive words with similar endings, etc.). Audiences find the mutual recognition of these devices quite attractive. Listening to the rhythm of something may cause you to swing along with it, even though you don't agree with the content of the proposition. By getting the audience to appreciate the form in which a statement is cast, the sender will be better poised to interest the audience in identifying with the content of the statement.[29]

The form can win audience interest even if the content is at odds with one's beliefs - television does this well. Speakers must always negotiate this tension. The more similar the meanings aroused between sender and receiver, the greater the potential for effective communication. However, persuasion implies a difference of opinion and position. As William Willimon stresses, "Christian communication is a clash of cultures."[30] The desire for identification could begin to take precedence over the speaker's interest in changing the audience's attitude. Political speeches have been known to please the audience at all costs, even the cost of truth. The challenge of rhetoric is to design messages that face both sides of the tension between needing to please and needing to confront.

Sometimes it is the character of the speaker which may dictate whether an argument may or may not persuade. Either the perceived distance between hearer and speaker is too great, and there is no experiential reason to listen, or the speaker may give off clues of being incompetent, or even a fraud. In either case, the message

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[29]Kenneth Burke, A Rhetoric of Motives 1950; reprint (Berkely: University of Southern California Press, 1969), 58.

[30]William Willimon, Peculiar Speech: Preaching to the Baptized (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1992), 88.

itself is ruled unimportant, because its sender is not deemed credible. David Cunningham says, "The authority of the rhetor is often as important to the argument as the 'state, condition or experience of the audience' (meaning '*pathos*')".[31] Rhetoric that elevates the cerebral would question this. In fact, many rhetoric textbooks include a warning against making a close connection in an argument between the speaker and the message - this is called a logical fallacy: '*the argumentum ad hominem.*' And yet, this is exactly what Aristotle believed. In fact he elevates it above other forms when he says, "... moral character may almost be called the most potent (*'kuriotaten'*) means of persuasion."[32] Cunningham concludes,

> Persuasion then, is not simply a matter of employing clever arguments, nor even a matter of correctly constructing the audience. The rhetor must also give members of the audience some reason to believe that the person to whom they are listening is worthy of their attention.[33]

The role of the community and context is another factor that influences persuasion. Em Griffin describes an experiment where straight lines are drawn on paper and people are asked to say which line is shorter. Most of the people in the test group though, are 'plants'; that is, they have been chosen and told ahead of time to give the wrong answer. Inevitably, after hearing all of these 'plants' say that the wrong one is shorter, the unknowing

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[31]David Cunningham, 97.

[32]Aristotle, cited in David Cunningham, 98.

[33]David Cunningham, 98.

interviewees agree with them. As adults they will betray what they know is the right view, because of peer pressure.[34] Griffin uses this as an example of how community factors influence persuasion. This is a conclusion David Cunningham reaches as well,

> Persuasion may happen best in communal contexts. Preaching often fails to consider community practices. The audience is assumed to be composed of autonomous individuals who evaluate arguments without reference to community standards.[35]

Rhetoric would remind homiletics to consider seriously the community of faith which authorizes, conditions, and receives each sermon. The theory that language is enclosed within the situation that evokes it is illustrated in Kenneth Burke's model called the 'dramatistic pentad'. Loscalzo describes this,

> According to Burke, every rhetorical action is a drama made up of 5 components: act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose. In terms of preaching, the act is the physical action of speaking, the scene is the environment and tradition of worship, the agent is the preacher, the agency is the sermon, and the purpose is broadly speaking formative. Burke's first law is that 'the scene contains the act', which he follows with 'the scene contains the agents'. By this he means that under normal circumstances language does not possess communicative properties outside the community that authorizes and understands them.[36]

Though speakers may not be conscious of it, every message they give has been conditioned by the audience, and follows a strict code that the community has established. Waldhart and Applegate identify nine components of this cultural script: setting, channel,

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[34]Em Griffin, 193-194.

[35]David Cunningham, 94.

[36]Craig Loscalzo, 54-55.

participants, relationships, purpose, key, topic, norms of interaction, norms of interpretation.[37] Some examples of the cultural code are: speaking in a lecture hall to three hundred people is more formal than speaking to two people in a living room; the prime minister communicates his views on television, or in a radio interview, but not by writing postcards; strangers will not use double entendres, ask embarrassing questions, or touch each other. What is communicated, and how it is communicated are governed by the laws of the community and its context.

So, effective messages will take into account all the factors that influence persuasion - *'ethos'*, *'pathos'*, *'logos'*, and community context. Some of these components will be more pronounced and necessary according to time periods, cultural differences, and audience preference. In the age of Enlightenment and in academic, literate cultures the appeal to logic would be the top peak in the triangle. Don Wardlaw describes such an emphasis,

> ... (these speakers) while imbued with the mind of Christ, exegeted with the mind of Plato and Aristotle. When preachers feel they have not preached a passage of Scripture unless they have dissected and rearranged the word into a lawyer's brief, they in reality make the word of God subservient to one particular, technical kind of reason. [38]

When authorities are competing for an audience, the character of the sender is crucial. Today, emotionally conditioned people need to feel the significance of a message. And missionaries have proved that any message they bring must be perceived as benefitting

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[37]Enid Waldhart and James Applegate, 57.

[38]Don Warldlaw, cited in Gail O'Day and Thomas Long, 107.

the community and not dividing it. When they have ministered according to the cultural code, they have witnessed entire villages coming to faith in Christ together.[39]

William Willimon describes how even as far back as 1835, a shift in the cultural communication code was happening - one that sounds strangely familiar to today.

> August Tholuck wrote a book on preaching called Sermons, and he spoke 'a Word Concerning Preaching for the Cultured People of Our Day'... and wondered 'what can be done to bring the educated classes back again to take part in our worship services?'... The preacher must speak not merely as a preacher to us, but as a human being... It is not enough that one speaks the truth, it is essential how one speaks.[40]

He was proposing that the action from the sermon shift from the pulpit to the congregation. The humanity of the preacher had moved center stage, in order to match the needs of the congregation with the message content.

Mass media communication and cultural pluralism have created another shift away from the old sermon/essay style of Western culture, with its primarily cognitive goals. In light of North America's love of electronic media and entertainment, Quentin Schultze says that,

> Residents of secondary orality live in a new world increasingly defined by subjective experience and moralistic story, rather than objective truth and argument. The results of this shift are crucial for understanding the context of contemporary preaching. This enhances the effectiveness of Pentecostal and charismatic

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[39]See Donald McGavran and C. Peter Wagner, Understanding Church Growth, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1990), 221-237.

[40]William Willimon, Peculiar Speech..., 47.

> orators over virtually all other modes of preaching. These preachers usually offer the kinds of experiential validation and personalized storytelling that communicate effectively on the tube as well as in the culture shaped by secondary orality. The least effective method of preaching is shaped by dispassionate, highly systematic theologies associated with scolasticism, whether German Lutheranism or American Presbyterianism.[41]

Lucy Rose has described today's shift in rhetoric/preaching as being four-fold:

> 1. the purpose of preaching moves from persuasion to a transforming event; 2. biblical hermeneutics moves from central idea to saying and doing; 3. the language of preaching moves from clarity to engagement; 4. and the arrangement of sermonic material moves from logical reasoning to plot.[42]

Numerous kinds of preaching today are marked by characteristics that will not fit the older paradigm of preaching, which grew out of Enlightenment rhetorical principles and structures. Clearly it is a new day, and negotiating these changes is the task of rhetoric and homiletics.

What Rhetoric Can Teach Preaching about Persuasion

Rhetoric and homiletics have the same concern regarding knowing what persuades an audience. A historical survey reveals how they began as partners, but drifted apart by the middle of this century. Thomas Long writes,

> Once upon a time textbooks in homiletics were manuals of sacred rhetoric, studied attempts to take advantage of what was known about human communication moving toward the goal of persuasive preaching. Then, along came

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[41]Quentin Schultze, "Television and Preaching", Concise Encyclopedia..., 473-474.

[42]Lucy Rose, cited in Gail O'Day and Thomas Long, 97.

> neoorthodoxy and the rhetorical arts were swept out of the homiletical house in a wave of communicational iconoclasm. The preacher was to preach the biblical message in all of its strange radicality, and any attempt to make the message more pleasing or persuasive, to adjust the message to match the listening process was a sign of faithless anxiety.[43]

In practice though, preachers cannot really avoid rhetorical concerns, and it has always been this way. When Edward Corbett says, "the ancients made no provision in rhetoric for sermons", he is saying that they had no special category to put preaching in, not that preaching and rhetoric did not belong together.[44]

The prophets of the Old Testament (which predates Classical rhetoric) speak in language designed to persuade, and use a variety of forms that change according to audience conditions. The New Testament does this as well, and also elevates the '*ethos*' of the speaker. Paul frequently reminds churches of his love for them, and authority over them (Phil. 1:3-8, 2 Cor. 10-11). A study of the Bible reveals that there is no one form that God has sanctified for preaching. He used all available means of persuasion, culminating in the incarnation, even to the point of death. Paul said, "I use all available means to reach some" (1 Cor. 9:22). Cunningham analyzes this passage by saying,

> Paul does not claim that the Gospel is infinitely malleable, otherwise it would be powerless to change lives. Nevertheless, the various emphases of the Christian faith allow it to shift its weight whenever necessary. Paul doesn't alter the story just to flatter his audience, but has rewoven the story that it may gain

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[43]Thomas Long, Theological Education (ATS) xxv/1, autumn 1988.), 86.

[44]Edward Corbett, 40.

adherence among whatever audience he was addressing.[45]

Just as mechanics do not fix a car with only one tool, nor do surgeons operate with only one instrument, the preacher who wants to communicate effectively today must use a variety of tools and methods.

Rhetoric's relationship with preaching has early roots, both in Scripture and in church history. John Chrysostom and Saint Augustine joined the two disciplines in their own preaching. In On Christian Doctrine, Augustine encourages Christian preachers to equip themselves with as many rhetorical devices as possible, and to have as their goal the prompting of hearers to righteous action. Augustine said that the Christian orator should seek to persuade others, "not that they may know what is to be done, but that they may do what they already know should be done".[46]

With Augustine, theology was not able to communicate itself, and so secular theory could be used to help a speaker gain force and clarity with the audience. In his day it appears that secular rhetoric pursued eloquence as an end in itself, consequently, preachers were unsure about using such a pagan tactic. Augustine asks,

> Should preaching be eloquent? Certainly! - not that they should strive for eloquence alone, but to speak the truth, and in that process eloquence will follow as a servant... He who seeks to teach in speech what is good... that is to teach, to delight, and to persuade,

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[45]David Cunningham, 50.

[46]Saint Augustine, On Christian Doctrine, Translated by D.W. Robertson, Jr. (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1958), 142.

> should pray and strive that he be heard intelligently, willingly, and obediently.[47]

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, writers like John Broadus, George Campbell, Hugh Blair, and Richard Whately understood rhetoric as an effective tool for preparing preachers in both the defense and presentation of the faith.[48]

But Karl Barth was against this. Rhetoric was not just secondary; it was to be eliminated from homiletics to keep theological purity. Listeners have no place in shaping the sermon, which alone is the domain of the Bible and its gospel.[49] Another preacher today, John Piper, offers the same caution,

> God is the goal of preaching, God is the ground of preaching, and all the means in between are given by the Spirit of God. Whatever the preacher takes in his hand is by his incessant solicitude for relevance converted to psychology... this (produces a) loss of theological nerve.[50]

David Buttrick explores the historical dilemma of mixing sacred sermons with secular rhetoric, but concludes that,

> Rhetoric is actually a kind of cultural awareness. It helps us see how the people to whom we speak think, understand, visualize, and believe. Good rhetoric works from the common, everyday language that ordinary people use, so preachers must become rhetorically aware.[51]

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[47]Ibid.

[48]Craig Loscalzo, 411-412.

[49]For a summary of Barth's views of rhetoric and preaching see Thomas Long, in Gail O'Day and Thomas Long, 176-177.

[50]John Piper, The Supremacy of God in Preaching (Grand Rapids:
Baker Book House, 1990), 20-21.

[51]David Buttrick, in Gail O'Day and Thomas Long, 205. See also David Buttrick, A Captive Voice (Louisville, KY:

Buttrick and many others today accept as a given that preachers have a theological responsibility to study the effects of language and to create sermons that structurally match the hearers' mental process.

And what is the ultimate purpose of matching content and method to the listeners? Surely, it is that they will be persuaded to accept more fully the Gospel and its implications in their thoughts, values, and deeds. A biblical understanding of preaching always has persuasion as the ultimate goal. Paul said, "therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we try and persuade others" (2 Cor. 5:11). David Cunningham defines all of theology as persuasive argument, in that it is language that attempts to evoke action by bringing the beliefs of the hearer more in line with those of the sender.[52] The intimate association between belief and persuasion can be seen in the meaning of their root words. David Cunningham explains their relationship,

> One of the most basic terms in Christianity, 'faith' translates the Greek word *'pistis'*, which is also the word for 'persuasion'... The Greek word for persuasion, *'peitho'*, comes from the same root as the Latin word for faith. Accordingly, Aristotle's term for rhetorical 'proof' is the related word, *'pistis'*... While the active form of *'peitho'* means to persuade, its middle and passive forms mean 'to obey'.[53]

Preaching has the ability to create faith in hearers (Rom. 10:13-14 - "faith comes by hearing..."), and so is a persuasive

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Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 112.

[52]David Cunningham, 5, 45.

[53]Ibid. ,39.

act. What that faith looks like, and how quickly it comes to a person, vary according to each message and each hearer. Persuasion focuses not just on getting someone to become a Christian, but on producing many smaller attitude changes up to and after this life-changing decision. Knowing what type of persuasion members of an audience need, and how to design a message to motivate all hearers, are chronic concerns for preachers. One excellent tool for evaluating the listener's spiritual level, which then guides in the design of messages, is the 'Spiritual-Decision Process' chart devised by James Engel.[54]

How intentional and manipulative the preacher should try to be in effecting the persuasion is a source of debate. An extreme Calvinist could interpret Isaiah 55:10-11 as proof that God superintends and energizes his Word, without the need of human manipulation, "So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth. It shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and prosper in the thing for which I sent it." But an Arminian might reply with Paul's statement in 2 Corinthians 5:20 that, "As Christ's ambassadors, we implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God!" John Piper bridges both extremes by saying, "When we preach, to be sure, it is God who affects the results for which we long. But that does not rule out earnest appeals for our people to respond."[55]

By saying that preaching persuades and manipulates, care must

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[54]See Appendix III for this chart.

[55]John Piper, 94.

be taken not to fall into a marketing-sales mentality, that uses any kind of pressure tactic to win customers. The purpose of preaching is to aid in the process of liberation, but any communication that treats the hearer as an object to be won, will in fact oppress them. The ultimate aim is to glorify God, not merely succeed as an orator. William Fore suggests that God is more glorified when the message is presented in such a way that people feel free to accept it or reject it by a reasoned decision, than when it is propagated as something they must bow to.[56] Preachers must respect the sovereignty of the audience, and know that there will be many like King Agrippa today who will not be fully persuaded, despite the preacher's best appeals (Acts 26:28). If anything, television's rhetoric has taught that persuasion happens in slow, cumulative processes, and may be most effective when it is least confrontational and overtly manipulative.

There is a danger in being so listener-oriented that preachers lose their persuasive nerve. Thomas Long warns against falling into the 'least objectional noise format', which is a term and strategy that some radio stations use with music that is designed to do nothing to the hearer. He says that,

> Such music is not intended to make you fall in love, think new thoughts, march off to war, etc. It is designed to make your subconscious say 'well, that's not so bad'. Preaching is always in danger of falling into the 'least objectional noise format'.[57]

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[56]William Fore, "A Theology of Communication...", 238, 240.

[57]Thomas Long, The Senses of Preaching (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988), 5.

He also warns against the opposite scenario where the preacher assumes that everything and everyone has to be upset when he or she preaches. If the 'least objectional noise format' is false then the'most objectional noise format' must be true. Long's balanced view is that, "People cannot be scolded into kingdom behavior, but if they catch the vision of the kingdom they will give their souls to be a part of it."[58]

Christine Smith errs on the side of pleasing the listener in saying that,

> The goal of preaching is be the creation of solidarity. We must trust each person to do his or her own searching, struggling, celebrating, and naming. We do not tell people what to believe but assume that people have the power to discover their own truths and faiths.[59]

In her scheme of preaching, theology, the Bible, the preacher, the sermon, and maybe even God have become one with the hearer's natural attitudes and experiences, which is not too far from New Age belief. Persuasion in preaching implies an outside authority must be listened to.

A good question to ask in determining one's view of preaching and what should be accomplished by it is, 'what comment would we like to hear at the door after we have preached?' Thomas Long quotes Edmund Steimle, who says the comment he would most like to hear is, "Pastor, how could you have known?"[60] They should identify

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[58]Ibid., 6.

[59]Christine Smith, cited in Gail O'Day and Tom Long, 184.

[60]Edmund Steimle, cited in Thomas Long, The Senses of Preaching, 16.

with the sermon, and find that they are known by the preacher, the Word, and the Lord. Others say that at the door people should be trying to complete the sermon for themselves via an inductive model which keeps them thinking. All of them would agree with Aristotle, though, who said, "The object of rhetoric is judgement".[61] Listeners must come to some conclusion about what to do with the sermon. Walter Brueggemann says,

> The preaching task is to enable the listening congregation one at a time and all together, to relinquish the world dying before our eyes and to embrace the new world of God's faithfulness that is crowding in on us, but only glimpsed most days.[62]

At Augustine's door he would be pleased if people said 'I learned something today, I was moved by what you said, and I intend to do something about it' (head, heart, and hands affected). Preaching involves the teaching of facts, propositions and doctrine, but there is more to it than that. A message that merely delights emotionally, or informs intellectually, is not adequate preaching, unless in some measure it influences the will. The following quote from James Stewart poetically summarizes what preaching is all about,

> The aims of all genuine preaching are to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God, to devote the will to the purpose of God.[63]

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[61]Aristotle, cited in David Cunningham, 44.

[62]Walter Brueggeman, cited in William Willimon, Peculiar Speech, 46.

[63]James Stewart, Heralds of God (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), 73.

The Importance of Emotional Appeal in Preaching

Established earlier in this thesis is the fact that television relies on emotional appeal as its prime means of attracting an audience. Applying such a strategy to preaching may upset some people who believe that emotion is inferior to reason. 'Facts over feelings' may be a needed message when truth is being compromised, but as an unchanging, cardinal rule, it is wrong. Jonathan Edwards who was known for his appeal to the affections (though he was never bombastic) faced a similar battle in the early 1700s. He writes that,

> It has long been fashionable to despise a very earnest and pathetical way of preaching, and they have been valued as preachers that have shown the greatest extent of learning, and strength of reason, and correctness of method and language.[64]

He fought against centuries of tradition that had viewed preaching as primarily the expounding of great ideas, and not as a vital encounter with the life-changing Word.

The battle still wages in 1996, though it seems the focus is much more clearly on emotional and experiential dimensions in preaching. The influence of television has encouraged this shift, for television is practising the truth of Aristotle - that '*pathos*' has a significant impact in persuading an audience. The producers of television shows know that no one in the audience is holding a book of logic, evaluating how precise the language is, or how strong the outline is. They know that in order to persuade, their

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[64]Jonathan Edwards, cited in John Piper, 83.

images and argument must move the viewer emotionally, and so that is what they deliver.

While the modern age characterizes the emotions as irrational, Aristotle understood them as rational. Passions can be shaped by argument, and so they must be related to human reason.[65] The importance of emotion in one's makeup and in coming to decisions is being studied and emphasized by Israeli Psychologist Reuven Bar-On. He spent fifteen years developing an emotional quotient (EQ) exam, which is about to be published. He legitimizes the phrase 'emotional intelligence', which until recently had been an oxymoron. Bar-On says,

> The 20th century has been dominated by the [IQ], but we've found that some people who have high IQs are not successful in life. Emotional intelligence evaluates our skills in coping with the experiences of life. Unlike IQ, which is the byproduct of upbringing and genetic factors, emotional intelligence is learned and can be improved.[66]

Emotion in this day cannot be considered by preachers as unimportant or a sign of instability. It is the vehicle through which the Gospel may have entrance into lives.

Part of Aristotle's definition of '*pathos*' is "putting the hearer into an appropriate frame of mind".[67] In order to move an audience, one must first gain their interest and attention. The audience must have good reason to listen, if the speaker hopes to persuade. Cunningham says that, "An argument that fails to flatter

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[65]David Cunningham, 83.

[66]Joseph Hall, "High IQ? Now Let's Test Your Emotions", Toronto Star, 10 August 1996, sec. A1, A4.

[67]Aristotle, cited in David Cunningham, 42.

is simply ignored."[68] Proverbs 16:21 seems also to agree with this fact, "The wise of heart is called perceptive and pleasant speech increases persuasiveness." The fickleness of hearers today has been increased by the electronic entertainment media, consequently, a sermon is being judged more on the basis of whether it is pleasing and relevant, than whether it is biblically correct. Barbara Brown Taylor describes this authority shift,

> We can no longer rely on the authority of Scripture and dogma to sanction our speech. They are no longer worth listening to, according to many hearers. The authority of our age is the authority of experience. If we want to speak meaningfully to people we will speak to them about the real lives in which they experience meaning; meaning that is felt as well as thought and intuited as well as perceived.[69]

She may be overstating the case, for many church members (especially the older generation) still accept biblical authority, the need for worship and sermons, and the importance of being committed even when church experience is not exciting. Not everyone is as postmodern as many writers suppose. However, her reminder is needed lest the church settle for only in-house talk, and not learn how to reach the wider culture.

The term Barbara Brown Taylor uses for the kind of preaching that appeals to emotion and is experiential is, 'body language'. She explains that Jesus spoke in this physical, sensory language,

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[68]David Cunningham, 47. Augustine said that each sermon must 'delight', which is a technical term from rhetoric meaning roughly "the satisfying emotional response of listeners to what is said". Augustine, cited in Thomas Long, The Senses of Preaching, 22.

[69]Barbara Brown Taylor, in Gail O'Day and Thomas Long, 210.

so that his hearers could see, hear, and touch each message. He used the most ordinary things of the world to speak the extraordinary language of God. Brown Taylor says,

> 'Body language' is the primary language of story; it is short on concepts, and long on pictures. It seizes the listener at the levels of emotion and intuition, appealing to those centers of religious meaning that the secondary language of creed cannot touch. Preachers must be fluent in the language of theology but also in the language of image, learning to paint pictures and tell stories as effectively as they compare ideas and organize thoughts...
>
> Our appropriation of the Christian life is an imaginative and not simply an intellectual exercise. Imagination is a rarefied kind of make believe, in which one acts as if certain things are true, and in the acting, discovers that they are. Imagination is the meeting place of God and humanity... Our lives are governed less by deep convictions than by deep images. The pictures inside us are visual catalogues of the meaning we make for our lives. They are the engines that make us go or fail to make us go.[70]

Contemporary homiletics is realizing that it is through emotion, image, and imagination that lives are changed. Common experience seems to validate this as well. If a man were asked to give his reasons for getting married, it would sound very little like a traditional deductive sermon. He would likely give reasons such as, 'I fell in love', 'she won my heart', 'it seemed like the best thing', etc. Few testimonies of Christian conversion contain descriptions of how people were reasoned into the new kingdom. That does happen, but the majority say things like, 'God seemed so real', 'his Word hit home', and 'I was at the bottom, looking up'. None of these statements come out of deductive theory, but out of the way people live - their inductive experience. That is why

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[70]Ibid., 212-214.

Craddock says, "The listener's experience is the alpha and omega of preaching."[71]

Emotional appeal, then, is not just a technique to gain interest, but it can also be a valid language for people that names God just as traditional theoretical language does. Ian Pitt-Watson, preaching professor at Fuller Theological Seminary, said,

> The truth of the faith is something that is felt rather than thought by many deeply committed Christians,... Many in our congregations who think unreliably about their faith feel authentically about it.[72]

Tex Sample adds another illustration to this truth, when he tells of a Hispanic woman named Inez, who describes God as "a *sentimiento* (a deep feeling), a force that makes me move in difficult moments... something I cannot explain".[73]

'*Pathos*' is also the language that moves people to action. As Edward Corbett said, "It is the will that controls the actions, and the emotions is [sic] one of the best ways to move the will."[74] Ian Pitt-Watson writes,

> Intellect and will alone may hear the law preached but not the gospel. The intellect may accept the truth of what is said, and the will may strive to act upon it; but until the emotions assent to the intellect, they will labour, and even if the gospel is preached, only the law

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[71]Fred Craddock, Overhearing the Gospel (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1978), 104.

[72]Ian Pitt-Watson, cited in Galli and Larson, 17.

[73]Tex Sample, 7. He calls this "a faith language of the heart", 73.

[74]Edward Corbett, 37. Henry Mitchell writes about the "crucially important process of helping the hearer to experience the sermon and not just understand it", Henry Mitchell, in Gail O'Day and Thomas Long, 226.

will be heard.[75]

Every sermon evokes certain emotions, but usually these are neither planned nor recognized by the preacher. If *'pathos'* is one of the most important factors in persuasion, then surely it should become as much a part of deliberate sermon design as the *'logos'*. How this can be done will be discussed practically in chapter six.

In decrying the tyranny of rationalism, it would be easy for people to go to the other extreme of elevating emotionalism. In some homiletical discussions the traditional, three-point sermon has been almost labelled an enemy of the faith. In a descriptive way, Long warns against the contemporary tendency of preachers to,

> ... construct sermons that sound like 'new age' music, all process and devoid of intellectual ideas - pleasant sounds with fill-in-the-blank content... Congregations are served Etch-a-Sketch sermons: you turn the knobs; you make your own picture.[76]

Such preaching may draw a crowd, especially as it seems novel for a while, but ultimately it will not feed the flock and build the church. Solid information, biblical exposition, and arguments that give people a reason for their faith are as necessary as emotional images. Galli and Larson use the analogy of sermons as food, when they say, "Emotion alone can be as empty as cotton candy, and logic alone can be a tasteless meal of vitamin pills - together they satisfy and nourish."[77] A dichotomy of feeling versus thinking will profit no one, and so the rhetor must learn to speak the

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[75]Ian Pitt-Watson, cited in Galli and Larson, 19.

[76]Thomas Long, in Gail O'Day and Thomas Long, 171-172.

[77]Galli and Larson, 75.

language of both.

The rise of narrative preaching is needed in this entertainment, story-oriented culture. However, it is not the only form, nor even the best form, in which to always preach. Thomas Long is correct for reminding preachers that,

> Christians do not live by stories alone... There is a rhythm in the language of faith between narrative and discourse, between story and insight which needs to be preserved... If we preach only the insights we end up with a propositional and scholastic form of the faith. If we preach only the stories we end up with hopeless ambiguity. The rhythm between them must be preserved.[78]

While most preachers agree that the changing culture must lead to preaching changes, others reject such accommodation. William Willimon judges the shift as negative: It shows the timidity of the church and the deterioration of religious life in the culture. The 'softer' sermon, and shift in authority from the preachers to the hearers, are a bad sign for the church - an indication of declining confidence in and clarity about the gospel.[79]

On this other side are still people who are suspicious of emotion. Intentionally trying to arouse emotion is judged by many to be unethical. Emotional appeals do run the danger of getting people so charged that their wills become overpowered by the rhetor's suggestions. Adolph Hitler, Rev. Jim Moon, David Koresh, and many other orators have proven that accentuated '*ethos*' and '*pathos*' can be used for dangerous ends. Rhetoric is like a fire that can either bring warmth and light when used properly, or burn

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[78]Thomas Long, The Senses of Preaching, 17.

[79]William Willimon, Peculiar Speech, 47-51.

if let loose.

John Piper holds up Jonathan Edwards as a model of piety and seriousness with the report that, "He was totally serious from beginning to end. You will look in vain for one joke in the 1200 sermons that remain... He wrote out his sermons in full and read them with few gestures."[80] The implication of this is that humor, gestures, and eye contact are out of place in 'true' preaching. But using *'pathos'* in preaching does not mean one has to become dramatic and funny in the pulpit. George Marsden describes Edwards as one of the most compelling preachers of his generation because "he painted vivid verbal pictures that could excite the affections".[81] Edwards may be from a rationalistic age, but he can hardly be cited as an example for the necessity of avoiding emotional appeals. Thomas Long speaks to this tension, and once again provides a balanced answer,

> By beginning with people's experience some may wonder whether we are abandoning theological integrity and depth and carefulness. We do not go to the systematic and doctrinal books in order to find out what people are supposed to believe so that we can explain it to them. We will rather, go to theology because it will teach us where to look and how to look for the power of the Risen Christ in human experience.[82]

This order reflects wisdom. By first beginning with emotion

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[80]John Piper, 47, 49. He goes on to lament that today, "laughter seems to have replaced repentance as the goal for many preachers", 56.

[81]George Marsden, "Jonathan Edwards", Concise Encyclopedia of Preaching, 114.

[82]Thomas Long, The Senses of Preaching, 46.

and experience, people will identify with a message, and then secondly, they will look for insight on their experience, giving preachers an open door. If authority is not readily granted to the preacher today, then it will have to be earned. One effective way is to adopt a rhetoric that begins with the emotional state and experience of the hearer. Again, either-or categories are to be rejected. Em Griffin reminds readers that such extremes have produced trouble for the church before,

> In the early part of this century, theological liberals stressed the need for social action, even at the expense of right doctrine. Then came the fundamentalist movement which stressed right doctrine, at the expense of social action. Salvation became right belief, with little feeling. In the last decade the charismatic movement has stressed affinity of the heart as the sign of oneness with God. If we can learn anything from recent Church history it is that we need to be concerned equally with all three - cognitive belief, emotional affect, and behavioral intention. We ignore any of them to our own peril, and that of the gospel.[83]

The insight that psychology can give preachers today, says Robert Liebert, is that, "Everything a person does is multiply determined. It is useless to try and isolate a single cause."[84] This chapter has sought not to elevate *'pathos'* as the only criterion in persuasion, but to respect it and use it as much as *'logos'* has been, especially in this culture that has been on a steady diet of televised emotion.

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[83]Em Griffin, 19.

[84]Robert Liebert, "Report of the Study Commission...", 201.

CHAPTER 6

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR PREACHING PERSUASIVELY

This chapter offers practical suggestions for becoming more effective in persuading the television generation with biblical truth. The electronic revolution, as described in chapter four, means that a sermon style that worked in the 1950s is not likely to be a good sermon for today. An interesting insight is given by Kathleen Hall Jamieson as to why Ronald Reagan was such an effective speaker to the masses. It was because Reagan avoided the elevated style of traditional public speech and became more personal, narrative, and graphic. Jamieson quotes one of the speech writers who said her strategy was to "think cinematically".[1] Most preachers sense the need for change, but may be unsure where to begin. Few, if any, have been trained in cinematic or fictional technique, and so need a how-to guide.

The first step is to expand one's hermeneutical approach to studying Scripture, by including the emotional quotient as well as the idea quotient in one's exegesis. Applying rhetorical analysis to past sermons and the sermons of others is also a good exercise in learning to weigh the *'pathos'*, *'ethos'*, and *'logos'* of each

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[1]Kathleen Hall Jamieson, Eloquence in an Electronic Age: The Transformation of Political Speechmaking (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988) 162; cited in Thomas Troeger, "Emerging New Standards In The Evaluation of Effective Preaching", Papers Of The Annual Meeting of the Academy of Homiletics (Farmington, MN: 1989), 192.

message. Next, the masters of communication - journalists, television producers, authors, and preachers - are consulted for the techniques they use to make messages works of art. Using graphic language, suspense, stories, and speaking to felt needs, are some of the many ways to make an idea persuade. The final section stresses the role of '*ethos*' in preaching, especially as it is revealed in the delivery stage. A well crafted message can still be lifeless if the preacher is not enthused about its importance, and fails to deliver it with passion. The relationship between sender and hearer in the preaching act must be perceived as beneficial to the hearer. The relationships between sender and message, sender and receiver, and sender and God must be credible and convincing to encourage persuasion.

Developing Rhetorical Awareness

One of the great advantages that has come from the application of literary theory and criticism to the Bible is a better appreciation for the variety of forms and rhetorical intentions within different passages. When one stops viewing Scripture as just a book of outlined propositions, new worlds of homiletical possibilities open up. Thomas Long has been a key homiletical voice in the literary approach to the Bible, and he offers this fundamental rule of interpretation,

> Texts are not only concerned with saying things but with doing things, and that means they say what they say in different ways. Preaching that is faithful to the text

will seek to do what the text does.[2]

Traditional seminaries and commentaries have usually trained preachers to trace the argument and flow of ideas in Scripture, and to faithfully reproduce that information in the sermon. If it is true that people are persuaded to action by *'pathos'* as much as they are by *'logos'*, then a more faithful hermeneutic should also plot and recreate the emotional flow of a text. The EQ must be weighed along with the IQ.

First, the preacher needs to determine with whom he or she stands - with the people as a listener eager to experience the text, or with God as the expert teller of it? This key question is one hallmark of contemporary homiletics, reflecting a new and better relationship between congregation and preacher. Craddock illustrates this shift, "In traditional sermons there is no democracy here, no contributing by the hearer. If the congregation is on the team it is as javelin catcher."[3] One's own relationship to the text, the congregation, and the preaching event may need to be adjusted to allow better emotional identification. A top-down, teacher-student, parent-child model will always make the evoking of *'pathos'* artificial, if not difficult. Long also advocates an audience-sensitive hermeneutic when he says,

> Exploring a text is like exploring a cave - searching not just for ourselves but for the ones who have sent us there on their behalf. After a lot of digging we stand on Sunday with dirt still on our faces and flashlights in hand to say, 'have I got something to show you... come

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[2]Thomas Long, The Senses of Preaching, 34.

[3]Fred Craddock, As One Without Authority, 55.

with me.'[4]

A helpful exercise would be to evaluate one's past sermons according to the implied stance of the preacher. Is there an air of collegiality or of superiority? Are the illustrations designed to reprove or improve? Does the structure create a shared experience, or a safe distance? One may impress from a distance, but will only impact when up close. The first issue, then, is how close and emotionally vulnerable the preacher will be to the Word and the congregation.

Finding emotional arguments in Scripture will have to be learned by paying attention to details, and using the imagination to locate one's self in the story. Apparently, Fred Craddock requires beginning students of preaching to launch their studies of every pericope with a listing of all its sounds, tastes, colors, and so on.[5] Traditional exegesis that looks too quickly for an outline will miss half of the life inherent in a text. A psalm, for example, should be read by sitting down with the Psalmist to hear his sighs, or his joyful singing, and not just read for the main verse or devotional idea. If preachers do not experience the text, it's unlikely that they can help the congregation to do so.

Garret Green emphasizes the importance of imagination when he says,

> To save sinners, God must seize them by the imagination. The preacher places himself (sic) at the service of this

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[4]Thomas Long, The Senses of Preaching, 34.

[5]As described by Henry Mitchell, in Gail O'Day and Thomas Long, 228.

> saving act by the obedient and lucid engagement of his (sic) own imagination.[6]

It is no small priority, then, to develop an experiential, emotional approach to reading Scripture. Consider 2 Samuel 12, when Nathan tries to persuade David to confess his sin. This in itself suggests levels of fear (the king could kill me), hope (may David's heart be soft), confidence (I know God wants this), and maybe even sympathy (I too am a sinner). The story about the man who stole a sheep also is full of emotion, and as David demonstrates, it evokes an emotional reaction. And then, there is the emotion of silence after Nathan says, 'You are the man!' The sermon ought to evoke several of these dominant emotions, but it won't unless its designer has first felt them, and planned for their inclusion.

When Paul says that he has been "afflicted, perplexed, crushed, but not despairing, etc."(2 Cor. 4:8-10), he is baring his heart. This is not a list of propositions to be explained (now 'afflicted' in the Greek means... 'despairing' is used six times in the book...). Rather, it is an event to be experienced. Isaiah could have said, 'God forgives you.' Instead, he wrote, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool" (Is. 1:18). The length and rhythm of the poetry, along with the mention of colors, appeal more to the heart than to the head, if one listens rhetorically.

Sermons have always tried to tell the people what God says. In this age a worthy study and goal would be to help them feel what

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[6]Garrett Green, in Gail O'Day and Thomas Long, 181.

God feels. Such descriptions fill the Scriptures. Caution is in order, though, against reading into or exaggerating the emotion in a passage, or transferring one's emotional state into the text. Eisegesis is always a danger, regardless of which hermeneutic one uses. In some measure, all preaching should effect what the Emmaus road disciples experienced when Jesus was preaching to them. Their response was, "Did not our hearts burn within us?" (Luke 24:13). Anything less, and it is doubtful that the hearer will be changed. The preacher's emotional awareness of self, Scripture, congregation, and sermon is the starting place for such a truth encounter.

Designing Persuasive Sermons

Effective technique can be learned from television, fictional writing, and journalism about how to attract and persuade the contemporary hearer. Kowalski takes this advice one step further, by saying that preaching *must* be critically reviewed in light of television's enormous impact and popular style.[7] Now is the time for preachers to obey the Chinese proverb which says, 'Craftsman, know your tools.' Just as a sailor would know the intricacies of wind and sails, so a preacher must become skilled in the Word and the use of words. This is the approach taken by journalists Mark Galli and Craig Larson in Preaching That Connects, who instruct preachers in the art of professional, captivating writing techniques.

Typically, preachers have been confined to one or two modes of

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[7]Ron Kowalski, 44.

making sermons, and most preach out of their own preferred learning style, doing what comes naturally to them. For hearers who learn differently, and who have an opposite orientation (right-brain versus left-brain), these stock sermons can totally miss the mark. The shift to audience sovereignty, and television's own use of variety and multiplicity of channels, push preachers into greater variety in sermon design. Henry Farra provides a useful chart called "The Homiletical Grid", whereby sermons can be plotted according to their type and evaluated on a scale of how much they preach (an emotional scale) versus how much they teach (an information scale).[8] Becoming able to diagnose one's own homiletical emphases, styles, strengths, and weaknesses is a significant step of growth.

Most preachers used to worry only about the content of what to say; now, equal time must be given to crafting the style of how best to say it. Scripture itself shows there is no one correct preaching method, but that, according to the time period, the hearer's needs, and the occasion, biblical communicators used a variety of methods. Jesus is the supreme example from whom preachers can learn effective methods. Just as a mechanic does not fix an engine with one tool all the time, so today's communicator must be versatile, and have the wisdom to use different forms for different purposes.

Caution is in order, though, because such a focus on techniques can lead to a doctrine of pragmatism, and mimic the

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[8]See Appendix IV for this chart.

example of television which uses effective techniques at the expense of good content. One who is fixated on method can also draw undue attention to the sermon in all its cleverness, or the preacher who crafted it. The skills of the preacher are essential to persuasion, but they are not the ultimate reason why sinners are converted and the church grows. This balance must be remembered throughout the chapter.

The best way to attract someone's attention is to talk about something that is meaningful to that person. Issues that are deemed to be irrelevant, no matter how carefully they are designed and delivered, will not keep one's attention, and will not persuade. People change channels all the time until they find a show that resonates with their experience. The most boring and useless sermons are those that give answers to questions that no one is asking, and that seek to fill the head with theory, but fail to touch the heart with life. Galli and Larson report that,

> One television journalist associated with the popular show "60 Minutes" said the producers will never do a story about an issue unless they can find a person to tie that issue to. Even an issue like the destruction of rain forest, which is interesting and emotional, will fall flat unless it involves people in the story.[9]

Devising the 'homiletical big idea' (HBI) is an essential first step for preachers, but that main idea must always be critiqued with the question 'Who cares?!' Galli and Larson rightly assert that along with every central idea, a message needs a central emotion, "Every sermon needs a psychological centre, by

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[9]Galli & Larson, 41-42.

that I mean the fundamental emotion or need the sermon speaks to; fear, anger, gratitude, love".[10] Pinpointing such an emotion would help the preacher to keep at the forefront what the sermon should do, and not just what it should say.

The actual plot, structure, and movement of a sermon is as critical to effecting meaning as the specific words used. Quintilian said, "What a general is to war, so an arranger is to oratory."[11] The battle can be won or lost according to the skill of the general/arranger. And emotion can be elevated or downplayed according to the order in which the sermon flows, and the form in which it is delivered. Though David Buttrick uses different terms, his insistence on well designed moves supports the theory that the medium is the message.[12] If a persuasive message is written on a postage stamp, it will not have as much impact as on a billboard. In an essay form, the same message will be taken much more seriously than if scribbled on a napkin with crayon. And some forms will only accept a certain type of message - e.g., a sonnet cannot be two lines, nor can a telegram be twenty lines.

This is what Cunningham means when he says that a speaker constructs the audience by the choice of language, arguments, and format in which the message is delivered.[13] A speech that is full

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[10]Ibid., 55-56.

[11]Quintilian, cited in Edward Corbett, 299.

[12]See David Buttrick, Homiletic, chapters 1-5. His concern is in learning how language forms in consciousness and structuring messages to change consciousness.

[13]David Cunningham, 69.

of one-line jokes, quips, proverbs, and double entendres will fail miserably at the annual meeting of geologists, even if the content remains focused on rocks. When the format fails to construct the audience for the occasion persuasion cannot occur. The arrangement and style are not ornamental, then, they are substantial. Waldhart and Applegate quote a study in which the same basic set of facts was used in writing two news stories. One was composed in a traditional newswriting style, which presented facts in descending order of importance, and one was done in a narrative style which used a time order. They conclude that readers would show more arousal for and would be more likely to continue to seek those messages written in a narrative style.[14]

The overall movement of a sermon, as well as its individual components, should have a conflict, suspense, and resolution scheme, which is the structure used in almost all effective stories. Any time a complication is created, there will be a hunger for its resolution. Answers and resolutions are not satisfying unless they are preceded by questions and problems. A joke is never funny if it begins with the punch line. Proverbs 27:17 also illustrates this fact, "He who is full loathes honey, but to the hungry even what is bitter tastes sweet." Incorporating conflict, suspense, and resolution does not mean the sermon has to be formed as an extended story. Even a traditional, deductive-type sermon can become more experiential for the hearer, if the points are arranged according to rules of emotion, and not just rules of logic. Galli

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[14]Enid Waldhart and James Applegate, 33.

and Larson report that,

> One of the biggest trends to hit journalism in the last twenty years has been the trend to use fiction techniques in nonfiction writing. In other words, use the techniques of storytellers - plot, suspense, character development, metaphor, climax, etc.[15]

Undoubtedly, television's influence is behind this change. And if journalism, which is traditionally quite propositional and deductive, can update its method, so can preaching.

Kowalski explores some of the debate of whether there is a more faithful and effective sermon form,

> Peace and Stacey advocate segments of information with breaks in between, and DeRosa speak on behalf of short messages. Read insists on traditional sermons, while Gunderson & Hopper argue for better composition.[16]

John MacArthur remains fixed on the expository outline to communicate the logic of a passage, and criticizes others as heretics for doing anything less.[17] The general homiletical belief, though, is that an inductive structure of moving from the general to the particular is the best sermon format to match the listener's experience today, and provide a "vehicle of encounter".[18]

The sensual use of language will also affect the emotional identification of hearers. Words can be flat and nondescript, or they can be alive as images, reaching one's imagination and emotion. Galli and Larson describe how to use the best words to

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[15]Galli and Larson, 74.

[16]Ron Kowalski, 4.

[17]John MacArthur, xvii.

[18]Henry Mitchell, in Gail O'Day and Thomas Long, 232. See also Fred Craddock, Overhearing the Gospel, 62, 125.

appeal to the senses. They cite the following example, "'David strained to raise Goliath's sword over his head'", instead of, 'Goliath's sword was heavy'."[19] Preachers should become more fluent with specific words, rather than general terms, because again, specific grabs the imagination.[20] Clichés rarely stir emotion, unless it is a negative reaction due to the hearer feeling insulted by such stale terminology.

There is a balance to be sought here, because language must be familiar enough that people will easily understand, but fresh enough that new meanings will be opened up to them. An economy of words is also important, especially in an oral speech, since hearers cannot go back to rethink what a statement means. If a sentence is too lengthy and it sounds technical, or the structure is too complex, it will create a blur intellectually and emotionally.

Another challenge is to combine words in such a way that show more than they tell, that illustrate more than inform. If a theoretical concept is being discussed, it will help the hearer to see that concept fleshed out in the life of someone. It used to be that quotes of famous people held attention and conveyed authority (e.g., 'as Spurgeon said...'). Now however, if the hearer can visit a scene in another person's experience, there will be instant

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[19]Galli and Larson, 87. They also add that "brain researchers say artistic speech speaks the language of the right side of the brain that prosaic speech cannot reach", 105.

[20]Galli and Larson, 73. See also Sue Nichols, Words On Target (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1963).

attention and authority. A key question media writers, editors, and producers continually ask is, "How can we put a face on this?"[21]

The following example shows how some of these methods used together can engage the heart.

> Joseph is the forgotten man of Christmas. He is Joseph the silent. In the Bible Joseph never says a word... Joseph has the role of an extra. He is a character with minor credits. When we deal with our nativity scenes, he may be the last one set up and the first one toppled over.[22]

Although most people would be indifferent to the character of Joseph, within about twenty seconds, by the skilled use of words and imaginative detail - 'never says a word', 'role of an extra', 'first one toppled over'- they are engrossed. They begin to feel sorry for Joseph, which touches the emotional need not to be forgotten.

A strange argument is put forth by Richard Mayhue, who in quoting William Ayer, asserts that sermons should be filled primarily with biblical terminology,

> Too much of modern preaching has taken a sociological and psychological turn... It speaks of repression, fixations, traumas, neuroses, and syndromes, world without end... In the main these are not terms that the Holy Spirit can use effectively.[23]

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[21]Galli and Larson, 73.

[22]Ibid., 39.

[23]William Ayer, cited by Richard Mayhue, "Rediscovering Expository Preaching", John MacArthur, 18-19. A similar theme is in The Supremacy of God in Preaching, which says, "Younger preachers fail to quote the text that support the points they are making... They get the drift of a text and then talk in their own words for 30 minutes. We need to saturate preaching with the Word that He inspires." John Piper, 41-42.

How one dictates what words God will use and not use is unclear, if not presumptuous. The example of Jesus was that he talked about common place things, and through them communicated holy kingdom concepts. He rarely spoke in biblical, sacred language. Preachers need today to become comfortable with the vernacular, and to stay current with the ever changing language.[24]

It is a theological fact that words create new worlds of meaning. Regaining this power of the word in the pulpit is essential but difficult today, because of the plethora of mass mediated words. Talk is cheap, and to be suspected, especially when it is from an agency or business trying to gain more adherents. The challenge is for preachers to distinguish themselves in communication by their sincere, disciplined, artful, and evocative use of language, so that God's word will have effect.

Delivering Persuasive Sermons

Preaching is distinctly an oral event. Even the best sermon on paper can fail to be the voice of God, and fail to persuade people if the preaching event is not compelling. People debate whether the design of a sermon, or its delivery, is the most important factor in persuasion. But either-or categories are to be avoided, much wiser is a both-and approach, for you cannot have one without the other. A view this writer disagrees with is stated by Gundersen and Hopper, who believe that effective content masks the effects of

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[24]David Buttrick estimates that 100,000 new words have been added to English since 1955. See David Buttrick, Homiletic, 194.

ineffective delivery in all time conditions.[25] Cicero ran to the other extreme by saying, "The three most important rules for communication are 1. delivery, 2. delivery, and 3. delivery".[26] Such hyperbole is obviously for effect, to balance the inordinate attention given to logic and content which can often result in dead sermons. This section gives extra emphasis to the need for effective delivery, arguing that how one says something is as important as what the person says.

It is especially in the delivery stage that hearers make judgements about the ethos of the speaker. The amount of emotion felt by the speaker will determine to a large degree the emotion felt by the hearer, since feelings are more caught than taught. Preachers cannot exhort their hearers into emotional identification, but they can model it. Commands to 'feel this' and 'do this' will have little fruit, if the speaker's own mood, presence, tone of voice, and gestures do not demonstrate what is requested.

Trust in the preacher as a guide, and accepting his or her message as being true, depend upon a sense that the preacher strongly believes the message and is under its influence.[27] This

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[25]D. Gundersen and Robert Hopper, "Relationships Between Speech Delivery And Speech Effectiveness", Communication Monographs 43 (June, 1976): 165; cited in Ron Kowalski, 4.

[26]Cicero, cited in Henry Farra, The Sermon Doctor, 36.

[27]Barbara Bate, "Oral Communciation and Preaching", Concise Encyclopedia..., 353. John MacArthur relays a quip made by a popular actor in England to a preacher, "I present my fiction as though it were truth, but you present your truth as though it were fiction." John MacArthur, 325.

supports Philip Brooks' famous definition, that preaching is 'truth through personality'. Craddock adds that, "The decision that a message is worth listening to is a decision that the teller is worth listening to. When we respond we respond to someone."[28] The sermon must come from the depth of a preacher, then, and be delivered out of that depth. It was said of Jonathan Edwards that his power was not in rhetorical flourish, or ear-splitting thunders, as much as it was in brokenhearted affections.[29]

The problem comes when the speaker is not enthused about the content of a message, or has such a conservative personality that getting passionate about anything is rare. By nature, people are more left-brain thinkers than right-brain feelers. And Sundays come consistently and quickly, regardless of whether the preacher is gripped with a sermon. With these scenarios it will take extra work to ensure that the delivery is full of life, but it must be done, so that truth is experienced and not just explained. Caution is needed, though, in attempting to artificially work up emotion, or to add it on for effect. William Zinsser's advice as a writer applies to preachers as well when he says that,

> Style is as much a part of a writer as his hair or lack of it. Adding style is like adding a toupee. Though at first glance, the formerly bald man looks young, perhaps even attractive, a second look (and with toupees there is always a second look) suggests something is wrong. He is well groomed, but he just doesn't look himself. This is the problem of someone who deliberately sets out to garnish his prose. The reader will usually notice if you are putting on airs. Respect comes from being genuine, so

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[28]Fred Craddock, Overhearing..., 43.

[29]John Piper, 102.

be yourself.[30]

One of the best methods for generating genuine passion is in prayer and meditation, asking the Lord to impress the truth on one's heart, and imagining how the hearers might need such a message. As Jesus said, "Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth will speak" (Matthew 12:34).

Effective delivery is also a technique to be learned, which means that stage presence, eye contact, gestures, vocal quality, and timing must all be analyzed to ensure they accurately convey the theme and mood of the message.[31] Preachers have much in common with actors on this point. MacArthur, while admitting that winsome delivery is necessary, criticizes any attempt to be dramatic in the pulpit as "... a crutch for weak preachers. The word of God alone is powerful enough to change people".[32] The timing of one's delivery is essential. Most feel nervous about using periods of silence, but just as white space helps to break up a page of text, so pauses can give relief and create suspense. Passionate preaching does not mean constant intensity and volume. A preacher who tries to emphasize everything, actually emphasizes nothing. Knowing when to crescendo, and when to whisper is an art to be practised; a fact Craig Loscalzo stresses,

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[30]William Zinsser, cited in Galli and Larson, 140.

[31]Barbara Bate mentions that using a manuscript can hinder persuasion if it reduces eye contact. With more eye contact comes more emotional impact, and more signs of how the congregation is receiving the message; thus, both hearer and speaker benefit. Barbara Bate, "Oral Communication and Preaching", 353.

[32]John MacArthur, 345.

> The sermon will never take flight if poorly delivered. Timing is crucial to the storyteller's art. Miss an appropriate pause, or misphrase a story's punchline and the rhetorical effect of the story can be lost.[33]

The preaching event should contain mountains, valleys, and plateaus in order to become a memorable journey. Galli and Larson believe that this tactic of Martin Luther King, Jr. was one reason why he was a powerful persuader.[34] The most effective fireworks shows and the most effective oral speeches are those that vary the pace, color, size, distance, and emotional intensity of each little explosion, so that the entire event can have full impact. One of the best books designed to help preachers with this area only is Reaching People From The Pulpit by Dwight Stevenson and Charles Diehl.

Finally, caution is given against trying to be a master pulpiteer as an end in itself, or thinking that either hermeneutics, sermon design, or delivery is the primary means to the goal of persuasion. This chapter naturally stresses methods and human skills which can and should be improved. Preaching is more than a public speech, though, and persuasion occurs under the Holy Spirit's power, not just by human expertise. Preaching is a unique combination of being a spiritual/theological entity that God has given and designed (Ephesians 4:12 calls it a spiritual gift) and a human science/art that is to be taught, learned, and practiced. Barbara Brown Taylor argues for humility, realizing that,

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[33]Craig Loscalzo, 415.

[34]Galli and Larson, 34-35.

> We cannot be sure of what they hear when they listen to us, or more accurately, what they see. I say 'God', and what do they see?... However carefully we choose our words and however well we aim them, we cannot predict what they will encounter. We are fishers, not engineers. We tend out nets and cast them as best we can, but our success, like our lives, rests in other's hands.[35]

As preachers determine to grow in rhetorical skills, it is possible to fall into a crude sales or marketing mentality - ever striving to find the right techniques to gain the largest audience. For this reason many books on homiletics include a chapter on the spiritual life of the preacher, and how prayer and holiness mysteriously increase ethos in persuasion. As eager as some might be to grow in technique, they should be eager to grow in spiritual depth. As Charles Spurgeon said, "We shall never have great preachers until we have great divines."[36] Preaching can use rhetoric, but must never be consumed by it, for in the end it is a mysterious event. That is why preachers are called to the minstry of the Word and prayer. Jonathan Edwards describes this mysterious mix of the sacred and secular quite well: "We are not merely passive, nor yet does God do some, and we do the rest. But God does all and we do all. God produces all and we act all."[37] The following quotation from Piper stresses the importance of spiritual preparation in preaching,

> The dangers of self reliance and self exaltation in preaching are so insidious that God will strike us if he

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[35]Barbara Brown Taylor, in Gail O'Day and Thomas Long, 208.

[36]Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Lectures to my Students (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972), 146.

[37]Jonathan Edwards, cited in John Piper, 94.

> must, in order to break us of our self-assurance... Without this demonstration of Spirit and power in our preaching nothing of any abiding value will be achieved, no matter how many people may admire our cogency or enjoy the illustrations, or learn from our doctrine... Good preaching is born of good praying.[38]

At times a preacher may feel inadequate as Peter did when he said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk" (Acts 3:6). Such humility and dependence on the Lord are necessary, especially as the preacher tries to become more persuasive.

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[38]John Piper, 38-39, 100.

CONCLUSION

This concluding chapter will restate the main issues studied, along with the findings and decisions reached about each issue. The implications and applications of this research will be listed. And finally, areas of future study that ought to be pursued in light of this thesis will be suggested.

Main Issues and Findings

The goal of this study is to analyze television through the rhetorical categories of *'ethos'*, *'logos'*, and *'pathos'*, to determine what implications there might be for preaching today. Understanding the nature of the medium is an important first step to analyzing its messages, methods, and influence.

As a commercial entertainment business, television's main goal is to attract the largest audience for advertisers. Serving the public is not as high a priority as serving the advertisers, the corporation, and its shareholders. Consequently, television will use whatever messages and methods hold attention, even if they are immoral or manipulative. The messages that pervade television programs are secular and consumeristic. The methods appeal to emotion, so that people experience television more than they learn from it. Deductive *'logos'* is virtually absent from television, and any attempts to teach via the medium must package information in ways that elevate *'pathos' and 'ethos'* (usually narrative).

How television influences people is debated. Those in the industry lie by denying any negative cause and effect relationship. The pervasiveness of television - reaching so many people at once with the same images - means that the environment, values, and perceptions of everyone have been altered by television. We live in an electronic revolution. It is the major storyteller of the culture, and has a cumulative, slow (but powerful) effect on redefining what is normal and right for the masses. Perceptual changes in communication expectations have been radical. Those used to the highly entertaining commercials of television have become more sceptical about who they will listen to, and more demanding that messages be creative and appeal to their experience and emotion. Television is an effective communicator because it matches methods and messages to the felt needs of people and dominant cultural moods and expectations.

This is the scope of rhetoric which seeks to find out how people are persuaded, and to match the right arguments in the right order for the benefit of the audience. Effective speakers seek to balance logical, emotional, and ethical appeals with a sensitivity to the communal context in which they speak. These angles of persuasion can be maximized or minimized to suit cultural expectations, but no one can be omitted. Historically, preaching has learned from rhetoric. As the 'new' rhetoric moves away from an Enlightenment rationalistic bias, preaching should continue to follow rhetoric's cue, and reinvent its strategy in light of the electronic revolution.

Preachers need to realize the importance of emotional appeal in attracting attention and changing values. Sermons that please the listeners, and evoke an emotional experience or identification within them, will lead to persuasion. And that is the goal of all preaching - not merely to teach religious facts, or create a religious experience, but to persuade into Christian action. Preachers can become more fluent in using *'pathos'* by reading the Scriptures according to the text's emotional flow and analyzing their own points of identification. Experiencing the text, and plotting its emotional claims, should be as much a part of exegesis as outlining the ideas.

Storytellers and professional writers have much to teach preachers about designing messages for impact. How it is said in this culture is as important as what is said, and preachers are competing against many in the media who are saying it very well. As an oral event, preaching requires a speaker who can make the words come alive through an impassioned delivery. The credibility of sermon and speaker are evaluated in the moment of delivery, and persuasion can be enhanced or weakened depending on how well the preacher combined the *'pathos'* of the message with his/her own *'ethcs'*.

The conclusion is that in light of rhetorical principles, and the influence of television, a new preaching strategy is needed that recreates the emotional appeal of Scripture in the emotional experience of the hearer.

Implications and Applications

The primary application of this study is to help the typical parish preacher to become more aware of rhetorical issues, and try to update his or her preaching style to better match the expectations of hearers who are conditioned by television's emotional images and methods. The importance and relevance of the pulpit in the church and the wider culture have suffered, and this writer has identified an approach which could, under the blessing of the Holy Spirit, connect with the type of hearer who is more media-literate than Bible-literate.

Adopting a new strategy in the church is difficult unless one has seen it modelled, and has some assurance that the benefits will outweigh the costs. Since most seminaries and commentaries teach a traditional model of exegesis and preaching, testing out this theory will be like stepping into the unknown for a while. Practical seminars using smaller groups of preachers and lay people would be a good forum for determining the strengths and weakness of this method. What is not needed is the typical symposium that presents papers, and debates theories, but never gets around to making a ripple in the experience of the preacher. Emotionally appealing preaching is an entity to be tried, not a doctrine around which people should immediately divide.

Preachers, and those who train the preachers (Christian higher education) stand at an important crossroads between repeating the past with its familiar forms, and venturing into the future with some new methods. The secondary orality in which half of the people

live is only bound to increase as society moves further away from a print-literate culture into an electronic one. Will the church continue to devote its largest budgets to the printing press, or will it put money into learning the electronic language of the twenty-first century? Educators need to be hired who are proficient in Bible and theology, but also those skilled in cultural awareness, creative communication, and media literacy.

That the church is basically ignoring the most important storyteller in society is unconscionable. Teaching members how to discern its influence, how to improve their viewing habits, and how to change the industry are goals that should be pursued in Christian education classes as well as in the pulpit. Barbara Hargrove says that, "We can make a difference in society if we empower our people to deal with the media actively rather than passively."[1] Pretending it is not a powerful force, or fearing that it is too secular a topic to be studied, are both unacceptable responses. Who else will provide a prophetic and redemptive critique for society, if not the church?

For Further Study

Many sources are indicating that we are on the verge of a new phase in the electronic revolution. The invention of telephones, televisions, and computers in this century has been epochal. The linking of these tools to speak the same digital language, will

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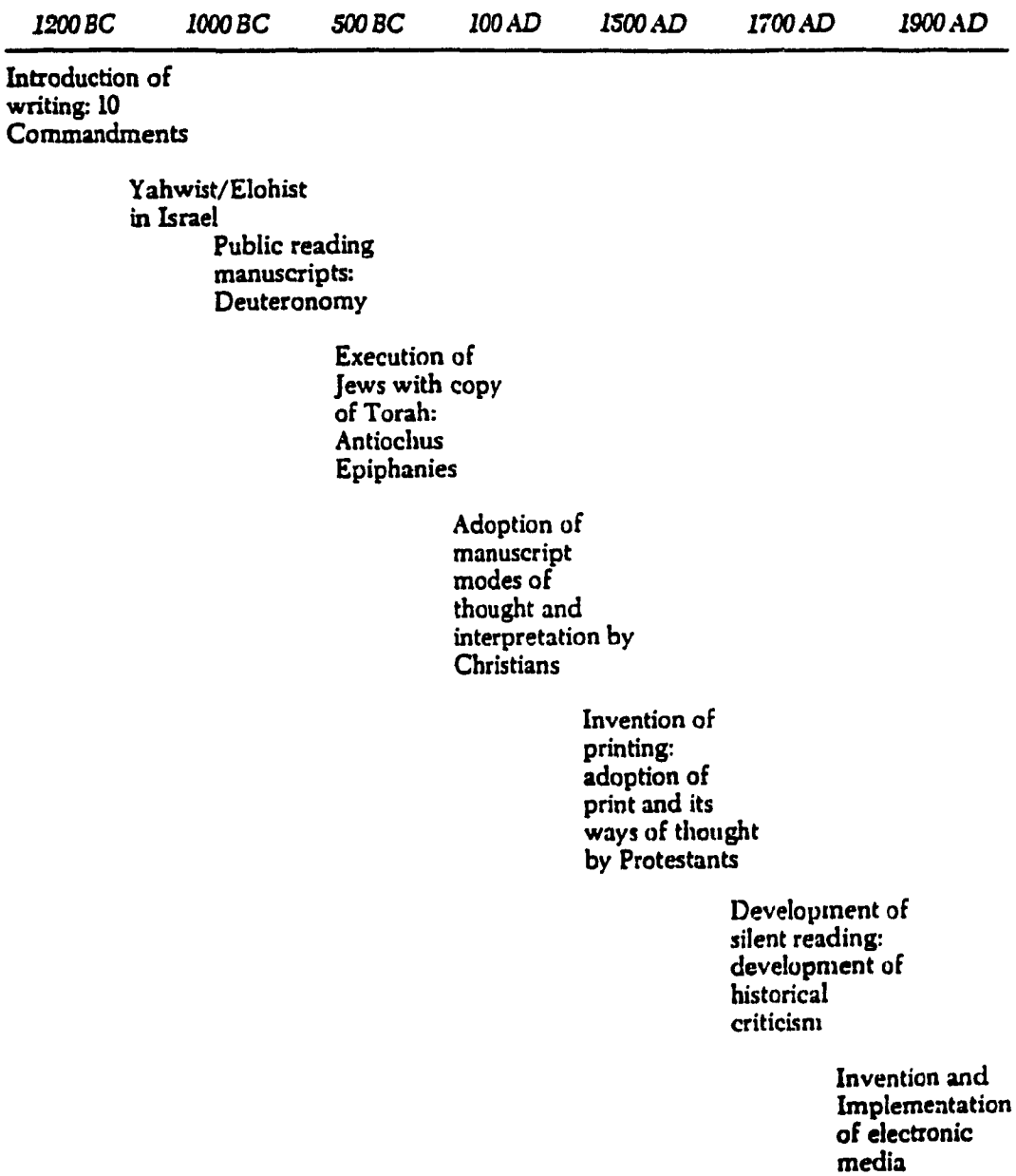
[1]Barbara Hargrove, "Theology, Education, And The Electronic Media", 230.

change society even more. Personal, inexpensive, immediate access to all the world's information is the goal, and soon the coming reality of technophiles. Industry leaders are producing interactive media, and striving to make television shows and computer programs appeal to even more of the senses. The blurring of technology and reality is a fast approaching phenomenon.

This thesis focused on this generation of television, which in its present format will not last into the next phase of the revolution. That means that just as the church is beginning to respond to the issues begun thirty years ago, it will find the culture has moved even more. The rhetorical effects of computers in communication is another thesis waiting to be explored. The continued conversation of rhetoric, homiletics, and the leading communicators of the day needs to be carried on. The church gathers weekly to ask if there's a life-giving word from the Lord, and preachers who can give a clear answer from Scripture in a language or communication method relevant to the culture, will be mediators of that life.

APPENDIX I

A History of Media



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APPENDIX II

The Bible and Its Interpretation in Ancient and Modern Media

Dominant Medium of Mass Communication	*The Medium of The Bible*	*Hermeneutical System*
Oral	Sounds/Sights	Retelling/Interpretation By Representation
Manuscript	Writing Read Aloud/ Public Sounds	Ideas As Locus of Meaning: Allegorical Interpretation
Print	Print/Read Aloud/ Private Sounds	Biblical Text Locus of Meaning: Literal/Figural Interpretation
Silent Print	A Document Studied In Silence	Meaning As Reference: Historical Facts And Theological Ideas Historical Interpretation
Electronic	Sounds/Sights	

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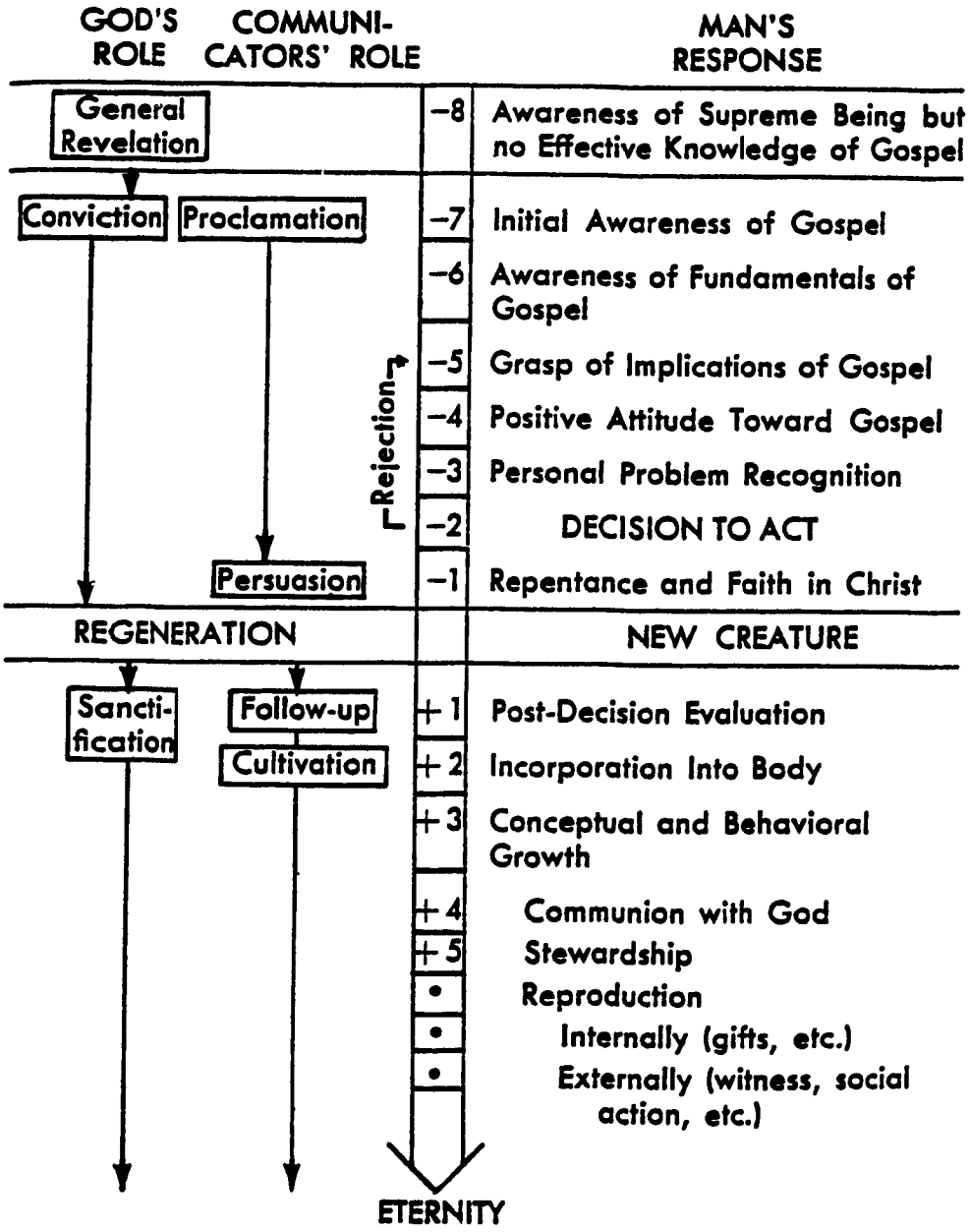
APPENDIX III

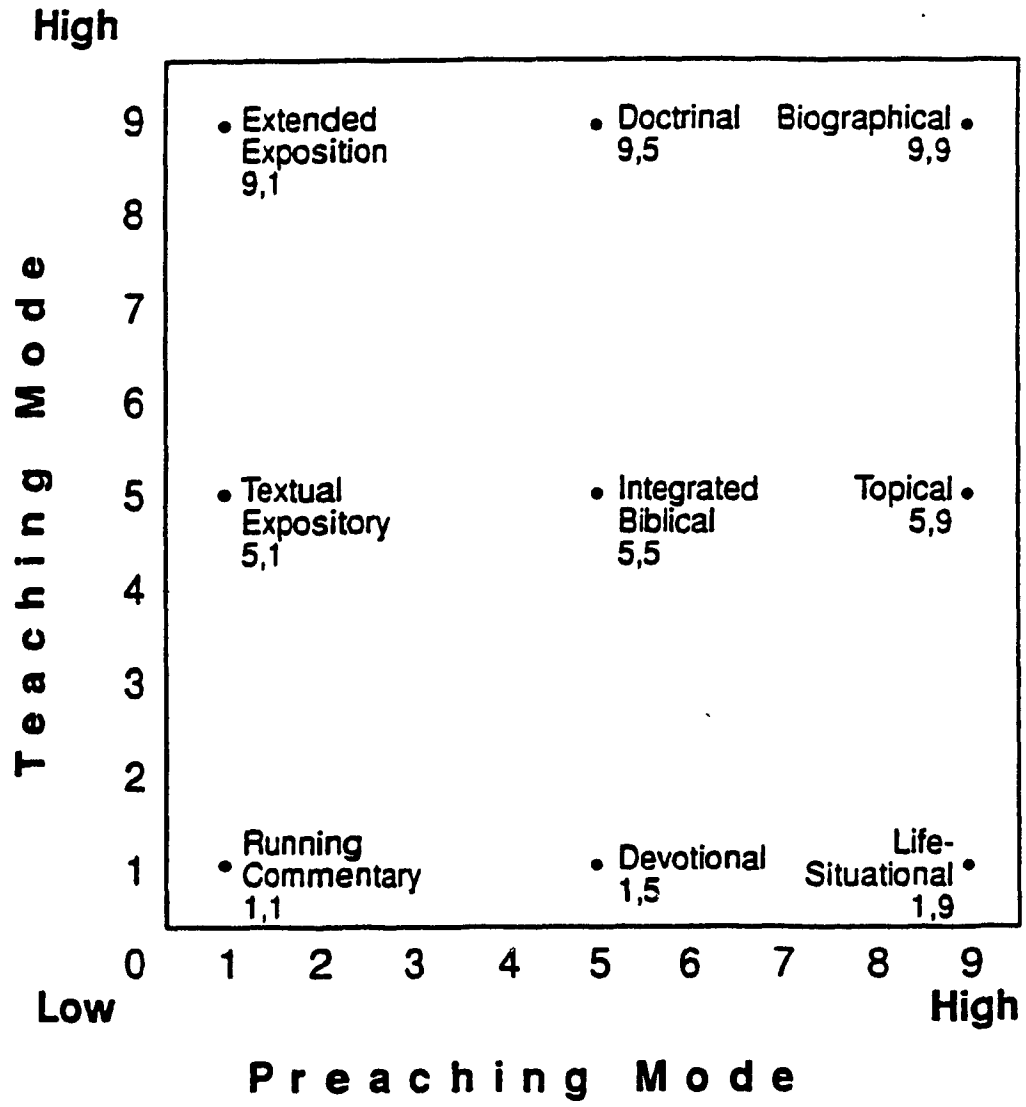
The Spiritual-Decision Process



Reprinted, by permission, by James F. Engel, author, How Can I Get Them To Listen? (Grand Rapids, Michigan: The Zondervan Corporation, 1977), 32.

APPENDIX IV

The Homiletical Grid



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